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Sixty-second session

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Fourth Committee

Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 4 October 2007 at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Mohamad (Sudan)

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07-52801 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Organization of work (A/C.4/62/1; A/C.4/62/L.1; A/C.4/62/INF/1)

1. **The Chairman**, starting with the same procedural remarks, drew the attention of the Committee to the relevant rules and recommendations of the General Assembly contained in the report of the General Committee (A/62/250) regarding the work of the Main Committees, including those contained in General Assembly decision 34/401 and resolutions 58/126 and 58/316.

2. In order to make full use of the time and conference services made available to the Committee, he intended to convene and adjourn the meetings promptly. All speakers, in particular the first three speakers for a given meeting, should be present in the Committee room on time.

3. He recalled that the General Assembly had decided to continue its practice, of departing from the rule that one quarter of the members must be present for a Committee meeting to be declared open and said that with respect to explanations of vote, rights of reply and points of order, the Committee would conduct its work strictly in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, contained in document A/520/Rev.16, annex V.

4. With respect to resolutions, he drew attention, *inter alia*, to paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 48/264, which encouraged Member States to exercise restraint in making proposals requesting new reports of the Secretary-General and to paragraph 69 of resolution 57/270 B, which requested that resolutions should be short and focus more on action-oriented operative paragraphs.

5. With regard to programme budget implications and rule 153 of the rules of procedure, he noted that the General Assembly had drawn the Committee's attention to paragraph 12 of its decision 34/401, which stated that it was imperative for the Main Committees to allow sufficient time for the preparation of the estimate of expenditures by the Secretariat and for its consideration by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee. That could take a few days, depending on the type and complexity of a proposal. Draft resolutions, draft decisions and amendments should be submitted in writing to the Secretariat as early as

possible for the Secretariat required at least 48 hours to process a draft resolution.

6. He also drew attention to document A/C.4/62/1, which contained the agenda items allocated to the Committee, and to document A/C.4/62/L.1, which contained the Committee's programme of work with a proposed timetable.

7. The Committee would continue with the practice of convening panels and holding interactive dialogues under agenda item 29, entitled "Assistance in mine action", agenda item 30, entitled "Effects of atomic radiation", agenda item 31, entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space", agenda item 32, entitled "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East", agenda item 34, entitled "Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects" and agenda item 35, entitled "Questions relating to information".

8. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the programme of work and timetable contained in document A/C.4/62/L.1.

9. *It was so decided.*

10. **The Chairman** said that, as at previous sessions, the Committee would establish a working group of the whole to prepare draft resolutions for submission under agenda item 31, entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space". He took it that the Committee wished to establish the working group.

11. *It was so decided.*

Requests for hearings (Aide-mémoire 01/07)

12. **The Chairman** drew attention to aide-mémoire 01/07, which contained 59 requests for hearings relating to the questions of Gibraltar, Guam, New Caledonia and Western Sahara, and suggested that they be circulated as Committee documents.

13. *It was so decided.*

14. **The Chairman** said that he had also received a communication from the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, who wished to make a statement under agenda item 40. The statement would be scheduled accordingly.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.

**General Assembly**

Sixty-second session

Official RecordsDistr.: General
23 October 2007

Original: English

**Special Political and Decolonization Committee
(Fourth Committee)****Summary record of the 2nd meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 8 October 2007 at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Mohamad (Sudan)**Contents****Agenda item 36: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations*****Agenda item 37: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories*****Agenda item 38: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations*****Agenda item 39: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories*****Agenda item 40: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*)*****Requests for hearings**

* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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07-53167 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 36: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (A/62/23, chaps. VII and XII, and A/62/67)

Agenda item 37: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/62/23, chaps. V and XII)

Agenda item 38: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/62/23, chaps. VI and XII, and A/62/65)

Agenda item 39: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/62/68 and Add.1)

Agenda item 40: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (A/62/23 and A/62/128)

1. The Chairman recalled that the cause of decolonization had been one of the defining issues of the latter part of the twentieth century. Owing to the untiring efforts of the United Nations, most of the world's population was no longer under colonial rule. Nevertheless, 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories remained on the United Nations list. It was therefore vital to maintain the momentum and complete the task of decolonization in the shortest possible time.

2. Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in his capacity as Rapporteur of the Special Committee on decolonization, introduced the Special Committee's report (A/62/23). Although the report had been streamlined, it continued to provide a comprehensive account of the Committee's work. The Special Committee had continued to analyse developments in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and had benefited, during the Caribbean regional seminar and during its regular session, in June, from the participation of representatives from the Territories, three of the four administering Powers, as well as from non-governmental organizations and experts.

3. In its report, the Special Committee stressed that the role of the administering Powers in ensuring

progress towards decolonization could not be underestimated and noted the exemplary cooperation of New Zealand with regard to the work of the Special Committee concerning Tokelau. It would soon be sending a mission to Tokelau to observe the referendum on self-determination. At the Caribbean regional seminar, discussions had focused on a strategy aimed at strengthening cooperation with administering Powers and improving the participation of the people of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

4. Finally, he said that the report underlined the importance of visiting missions as a means of providing and collecting information on the decolonization process.

5. Ms. Ferrari (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), speaking in her capacity as Chairman of the Special Committee on decolonization, said that decolonization remained a priority that required, inter alia, a collaborative effort by the United Nations system, the administering Powers, the international community and the people of the Territories themselves. It was especially important to provide the latter with information on the full range of decolonization options open to them. In that connection, she drew attention to a leaflet entitled "What the United Nations can do to assist Non-Self-Governing Territories", which had been produced by the Department of Public Information and the Department of Political Affairs.

6. Turning to the draft resolutions which it was recommending for adoption by the General Assembly, she said that the Special Committee had sought to formulate more action-oriented and focused recommendations so as to take account of the individual needs of the various Territories. Complete eradication of colonialism would require innovative, negotiated approaches to self-determination and a willingness on the part of all parties to cooperate.

7. Finally, she noted that New Zealand had cooperated in an exemplary fashion and that Tokelau was in the final stages of determining its future status with the administering Power.

8. Mr. Martínez (Dominican Republic), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the Rio Group reaffirmed its support for the decolonization process and called upon the administering Powers to adopt the necessary measures for the decolonization of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, taking into account their particular characteristics. It hoped that

the administering Powers would disseminate information concerning the Territories under their control. The Rio Group supported the work of the United Nations Information Centres and the Department of Public Information in disseminating information aimed at promoting the objectives of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. It welcomed the publication of the leaflet entitled "What the United Nations can do to assist the Non-Self-Governing Territories".

9. The Rio Group expressed its support for the Government of the Argentine Republic and felt confident that the Governments of the Argentine Republic and of the United Kingdom would resume negotiations to find a peaceful, just and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute relating to the Malvinas (Falkland), South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Organization of American States.

10. With regard to the small island Territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific, the international community must facilitate sustainable growth of their economies in order to advance the decolonization process and must pay special attention to the particular problems affecting those Territories.

11. Concerning Western Sahara, the Rio Group expressed its satisfaction with the progress made by the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara and with the fact that the parties concerned had decided to resume negotiations in accordance with the various Security Council resolutions. Finally, it noted the progress made by Tokelau.

12. Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) observed that, notwithstanding repeated reiterations, *inter alia*, in the 2005 World Summit Outcome of the need to respect the right of people to self-determination, there were still 2 million people living in Non-Self-Governing Territories. Member States were duty bound to take an active interest in helping dependent peoples to exercise that right. The Committee had made vigorous efforts to strengthen its links with the Territories by various means and to encourage closer cooperation with the administering Powers. China had always supported the rights of the people of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

13. Mr. Sahel (Morocco) said that the Committee's consideration of the question of Western Sahara was taking place in a promising context established by Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) following the submission by his Government, on 11 April 2007, of a document entitled "Moroccan initiative for negotiating an autonomy statute for the Sahara region" to the Secretary-General. That initiative was the result of a process of national consultation between all the national political parties and the representatives of the Saharan population. The autonomy statute would be submitted to the populations concerned for a referendum. The proposal would benefit all the inhabitants of the region for it would allow the people of the region to run their own affairs democratically within the framework of national territorial integrity.

14. The Security Council had taken note of the proposal (in resolution 1754 (2007)) and had called upon the parties to enter into negotiations without preconditions in good faith, taking into account the developments of the last months. The Council had thereby initiated a new political process that offered hope for the region.

15. His delegation welcomed the fact that the negotiations that had been held following the adoption of that resolution had rectified an earlier injustice and that the right of the majority of the population of Western Sahara to be represented at negotiations on the future of the region had been reaffirmed. It was essential that the discussion of the question of Western Sahara should be held in a spirit of consensus, reason and moderation, and that the text of the Committee's resolution on the subject should be in line with Security Council resolution 1754 (2007). Any attempt to depart from that resolution or to revive previous initiatives could compromise the new negotiation process and thwart the international community's attempts to bring an end to a conflict which had dragged on for too long. Accordingly, his delegation would not support any draft resolution that did not reflect the spirit and the letter of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007).

16. Finally, he reiterated his Government's willingness to negotiate with other parties and to cooperate with the Organization in order to bring about a solution acceptable to all, in the interest of peace, regional understanding and reconciliation in the Maghreb.

17. **Mr. Perazza** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) member States and associated States, reiterated their support for the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic with regard to the Malvinas (Falkland Islands) and expressed the hope that a solution could be found, at the earliest possible time, to the prolonged sovereignty dispute between the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom relating to the Malvinas (Falkland), South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations and the declarations of the Organization of American States (OAS). In that context, he underscored the continued readiness of the Argentine Republic to renew bilateral negotiations on sovereignty with a view to achieving a fair, peaceful and lasting solution to that dispute.

18. The question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) had been described by General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX) and numerous subsequent resolutions and by the Special Committee as a special and particular colonial question involving a dispute concerning sovereignty between the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom which required a peaceful, negotiated solution. The specificity of the dispute had been recognized by all the Member States, including the United Kingdom, and stemmed from the fact that the United Kingdom had occupied the islands in question by force in 1833, expelling their inhabitants and replacing them with settlers of British descent. The latter could not therefore be considered a repressed or occupied people. Accordingly, the General Assembly had stressed that the dispute could not be resolved through application of the principle of self-determination.

19. The MERCOSUR member States and associated States therefore called on the parties to respect the will of the international community, as reflected in relevant resolutions, and to resume negotiations in order to resolve their dispute.

20. **Mr. Yousfi** (Algeria) said that his delegation had always supported the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, and the holding of a free and credible referendum on self-determination, and had supported the various efforts in that regard, including the Houston accords and the Baker peace plan as set out in Security Council resolution 1495 (2003). It had sought to promote reconciliation between the two parties to the conflict with a view to helping them build

a future together based on peace, stability and shared prosperity. It had therefore welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007), which called upon the parties to enter into negotiations without preconditions, thereby clearly rejecting the efforts of one party to predetermine the outcome of any negotiations. In that context he recalled that in 1975 the International Court of Justice had declared that there was no legal basis for Morocco's claims in Western Sahara.

21. Noting that there had been reports in the media concerning repression of the Saharawi people living in the occupied territories, he said that those people should receive international protection. Moreover, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights should make public its report on its mission to Western Sahara and should implement its recommendations in cooperation with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). Journalists, parliamentarians and humanitarian organizations should be given free and unrestricted access to Western Sahara and its people. The Saharawi refugees living a precarious existence in Algeria should not be used as pawns by the occupying Power and should receive increased humanitarian assistance from the international community.

22. His delegation was convinced that a fair and lasting resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara required a free referendum without restrictions on the right to self-determination of the Saharan people, and he urged the Committee to express its support for the people of Western Sahara by backing the efforts of the Secretary-General to promote the negotiations called for in Security Council resolution 1754 (2007).

23. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) said that Senegal enjoyed good relations with all the countries of the region and had always supported initiatives aimed at securing a fair and lasting settlement acceptable to both parties to the conflict in Western Sahara. It therefore welcomed the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General to bring the parties back to the negotiating table. While supporting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Morocco over Western Sahara, his delegation likewise supported all efforts aimed at promoting peace and reconciliation. In that context, he noted that the Moroccan proposal submitted to the Secretary-General on 11 April 2007 was a compromise proposal which was in accordance with international law and the right to self-determination.

24. The recent meetings held in New York in conformity with Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) held out the promise of an end to the suffering of the people in the region. He called on the parties concerned to exercise restraint, to negotiate in good faith and to try to reach consensus. He hoped that the resolution on the question of Western Sahara to be adopted by the Committee would be a first step towards that new consensus.

25. **Mr. Chissano** (Mozambique) noted that the recent direct talks between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO held pursuant to Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) offered hope that a mutually acceptable solution to the conflict might be reached, and he called on the parties to the conflict to take full advantage of the opportunity offered by those negotiations. He also commended the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy in that regard.

26. **Mr. Antonio** (Angola), recalling that his country's long decolonization process had ultimately succeeded thanks to the efforts of many delegations present, said that Angola was morally obliged to contribute to the Committee's work. Indeed, decolonization should remain one of the principal concerns at the United Nations.

27. The status of the Western Sahara and its quest for self-determination was the most important question before the Committee and it should be resolved as quickly as possible. The Saharan people should be allowed to choose their destiny by referendum, just as other colonized peoples had before them.

28. Welcoming the start of direct negotiations between Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), he called on the parties to negotiate without preconditions and in good faith as requested in Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) in order to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. He urged the Committee to adopt the draft resolution before it so that the Organization could send a clear message to the parties.

29. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that all administering Powers had the obligation to ensure a free flow of information to and from the dependent Territories in order to raise the people's awareness of

their rights and of the progress they were making towards self-determination. Any decision to remove a Territory from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories should be taken transparently, once the people had freely and knowledgeably chosen their future political system.

30. The periodic visiting missions and regional seminars were useful tools for evaluating the situation in the various Territories and speeding decolonization. Such missions and seminars should be held annually — the latter, preferably, in the Territories themselves — but that required the cooperation of the administering Powers. A serious and respectful relationship must be established between the Special Committee and the various administering Powers, all of whom should participate in its important work. The Special Committee needed to receive from the administering Powers the latest information relating to the economic, social and educational conditions in the Territories for which they were responsible.

31. The administering Powers also had a solemn obligation to promote the political, economic and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the Territories and to protect the natural resources that were their heritage, and to refrain from harmful economic or other activities. It was thus a matter of concern that some administering Powers were conducting military activities and establishing military installations that ran counter to the interests of the people.

32. His Government reaffirmed its dedication to the goal of eradicating colonialism throughout the world.

33. **Mr. Smith** (Fiji) observed that in the course of decolonization there was no alternative to self-determination. All options were valid as long as they were in accordance with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned and in conformity with clearly defined United Nations principles. Any attempt to disrupt the national unity and territorial integrity of a country was incompatible with the Charter.

34. The situation of each Non-Self-Governing Territory was unique. Many were small islands but, irrespective of size, isolation or resources, each must be helped by the administering Power to exercise its right to self-determination without interference.

35. Regarding the Territories in the Pacific region, Fiji was aware that American Samoa had expressed

satisfaction with its current relationship with the administering Power, and it would respect and support the wishes of the people as they negotiated their status and future relationship. Regarding Guam, it supported the Chamorro people's request not to be removed from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories and asked the administering Power to take steps to promote the sustainable development of Guam's economy and involve the people in that process. France's efforts to further the economic, social and cultural development of the Kanak people in New Caledonia, and the closer and friendlier relations it had developed with the countries of the Pacific, were to be commended. Also, New Zealand's cooperation with the Special Committee as the administering Power of Tokelau had been exemplary. The people of that small island Territory would soon be going to the polls to determine its destiny as a nation, and Fiji wished them well.

36. Regarding Territories in other regions, his Government strongly supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to find a political solution acceptable to all parties to the dispute over Western Sahara. The current situation could lead to instability and economic stagnation in the Maghreb. Negotiations should also continue between the parties concerned on the question of the Falkland Islands/Malvinas; the views of the inhabitants themselves should also be ascertained by the Special Committee, self-determination being, after all, the first principle of decolonization.

37. Formal and informal contacts between the Special Committee and the administering Powers had proven to be valuable in developing programmes for the decolonization of specific Territories. Visiting missions were also an effective means of ascertaining the situation in the Territories and the wishes of their inhabitants. The issues involved in decolonization were complex, but Fiji was optimistic that, given cooperation and support, progress would be made in eradicating colonialism.

38. **Mr. Romero Martínez** (Honduras) said that the items on the Committee's agenda were vitally important for international peace and security, for the self-determination of peoples and the full enjoyment of individual and collective human rights. The people of Territories in particularly difficult situations should be given economic assistance and offered training and educational opportunities. Honduras attached great importance to all efforts at reconciliation and dialogue

that promoted the freedom of peoples and looked forward to the elimination of any type of mistreatment or human rights violation in any part of the world. The Committee's work should culminate in resolutions reflecting the common aspiration for the well-being of all peoples and respect for people of any race, colour or creed.

39. **Mr. Cabral** (Guinea-Bissau) recalled that decades earlier, Guinea-Bissau itself had, with tireless support from the Committee, achieved its noble aim of liberation, and that it was now collaborating with other members to satisfy the legitimate hopes of those still expecting United Nations help.

40. Regarding the Territory of Western Sahara, his Government welcomed Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) and it urged the General Assembly to encourage the parties to break the impasse by trying innovative approaches. The situation was urgent. Following the Manhasset meetings, it was to be hoped that the higher interests of the region and of Africa as a whole would guide the negotiations. The Committee itself must join the common effort and put pressure on the parties to continue on the promising new path until the negotiations succeeded. A spirit of consensus must reign.

Requests for hearings

41. **The Chairman** drew attention to communications containing requests for hearings under item 40: 1 relating to Gibraltar (A/C.4/62/2), 54 relating to Western Sahara (A/C.4/62/3 and Add.1-53), 3 relating to Guam (A/C.4/62/4 and Add.1-2), and 1 relating to New Caledonia (A/C.4/62/5). He took it that the Committee wished to grant those requests.

42. *It was so decided.*

43. **Ms. Mace** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, in response to remarks made by the representatives of the Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Honduras and Fiji on the issue of sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, said that the United Kingdom's position on the issue was well known and had been reiterated on 1 October 2007 by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom had no doubts about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. There could be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands unless and until such time as the islanders so wished.

44. **Mr. Chabar** (Morocco), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Algeria had no right to thwart the desire for territorial reunification that had been expressed by the legitimate representatives of the Saharan people at the Manhasset meetings. It had been trying to undermine the possibility of a political solution to the question of Western Sahara for more than 30 years.

45. It should be recalled that the majority of the Saharan people lived in southern Morocco and that Algeria had never been authorized to speak on their behalf. Moreover, the Frente POLISARIO had never been recognized as the sole representative of the Saharan people.

46. Algeria was in no position to speak of human rights in view of its refusal to meet with the delegation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the deplorable situation in Tindouf. Moreover, neither the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion of 16 October 1975, nor the United Nations, in any of its resolutions, had ever designated Morocco as an occupying Power.

47. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the suffering of the Saharawi would not end until they were allowed to exercise their right to self-determination.

48. The assertion that the Security Council, in its resolution 1754 (2007), had taken note of the Moroccan proposal only was not true. Moreover, it was absurd to deny that the Frente POLISARIO was the legitimate representative of the Saharawi people. Had it not been the Frente POLISARIO that had negotiated on behalf of the Saharawi at both the Houston and Manhasset meeting?

49. Turning to human rights, he said that Morocco was trying to deflect attention away from its own human rights record and he asked the representative of Morocco to provide documentary evidence in support of his allegations. In fact, the worst human rights violations occurred in the Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara, which was closed to the media.

50. **Mr. Chabar** (Morocco) said that, in its resolution 1754 (2007), the Security Council had established a hierarchy when it had chosen to commend the Moroccan proposal. The Council had also called upon the parties to enter into negotiations taking into

account the developments of the last months — a clear reference to the Moroccan proposal.

51. Any democratic solution to the conflict should not ignore the will of the majority of the Saharan people. That majority, which lived in the Western Sahara, not in Tindouf, supported the Moroccan proposal on autonomy for the Saharan people.

52. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria) said that delegations had been given a selective reading of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007). The Council had not accorded any special status to the Moroccan proposal; there had, in fact, been two proposals on the table at Manhasset. It was also absurd to say that in referring to the “developments of the last months” the Council had meant only the Moroccan proposal.

53. The Moroccan autonomy proposal was groundless because the Western Sahara was not Moroccan territory. The Saharawi did not need more autonomy; they merely wanted to exercise the right to self-determination.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.



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Sixty-second session

Official Records

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23 October 2007

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 3rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 9 October 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Mohamad (Sudan)

Contents

Agenda item 40: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of
Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under
other items) (*continued*)

Hearing of petitioners

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07-53375 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 40: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other items) (continued)

Hearing of petitioner:

Question of Guam (A/C.4/62/4, A/C.4/62/4/Add.1 and Add.2)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bevacqua (Famoksaiyan), took a place at the petitioners' table.*

2. **Mr. Bevacqua** (Famoksaiyan) said that for more than 20 years delegations had been coming from Guam to the United Nations but little had changed at the political level. The native Chamorro population of the island had dropped, from 45 per cent in 1980 to 37 per cent in 2000, and expansion of the United States military presence, without the consent of the people or Government of Guam, would further aggravate that situation.

3. He welcomed the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which, although not legally binding, represented a symbolic victory for indigenous peoples. Unfortunately, the United States had rejected the terms of that Declaration, considering that matters relating to indigenous peoples, including in the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Guam, were domestic concerns and that the international community had no mandate to interfere in such matters. Clearly the people of Guam would continue to be denied their right to self-determination by their administering Power. The United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia had rejected the Declaration, relegating the aspirations to self-determination of their indigenous peoples to the waiting room of history.

4. Although the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was already drawing to a close, little had changed in Guam, where a self-proclaimed beacon of freedom and democracy continued to deny the Chamorro people their right to self-determination and insist that the United Nations mind its own business. The United Nations must however reaffirm the administering Power's legal and moral obligation to bring about the island's decolonization in cooperation with its people and the Organization. Furthermore, in the face of the administering Power's intransigence, it was imperative

that the United Nations should send a fact-finding mission to Guam, even though it had not been invited to do so.

5. *Mr. Bevacqua withdrew.*

6. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Miles (Guahan Indigenous Collective) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

7. **Ms. Miles** (Guahan Indigenous Collective) said that the United States was avoiding its responsibility as administering Power to guarantee the right of the native population of Guam to self-determination. The United States military presence on the island continued to grow and military exercises were seriously affecting the land, sea and air environment. Moreover, the United States was encouraging its allies in the region to make use of its facilities. The military alone occupied one third of the land and the needs of the military were given priority. The growing military presence on the island was attracting business interests and more and more land including beachfront property was being bought up for condominiums and gated communities. As a result, the cost of living was rising and many native Chamorros were selling their homes and land and leaving the island.

8. The native population did not have the right to vote and received little monetary support from the United States, making it difficult for young people to pursue their studies and for native representatives to make their case for self-determination before the international community. The people were increasingly alienated from their lands and culture and knew little about the vast and inter-connected cultures of Oceania. Toxic waste from military exercises was poisoning the environment and affecting their health. The people of Guam needed help.

9. The militarization of the area was a direct impediment to self-determination for the people of Guam. The United Nations must encourage the administering Power to meet its responsibilities and provide resources to educate the local population about the issue of self-determination in order to ensure an unbiased self-determination process. The Organization and the international community must also work in partnership with the people of Guam to protect the latter's natural resources and environment and ensure their economic and social development. It was also urgent that the Organization send a fact-finding mission to Guam. Her organization would continue to

defend the rights of the people of Guam with a view to helping them take their rightful place in the international community.

10. *Ms. Miles withdrew.*

11. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Auyong (Guahan Peace and Justice Coalition) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

12. **Ms. Auyong**, speaking on behalf of Ms. Guerrero (Guahan Peace and Justice Coalition), said that the increased militarization of Guam was a direct impediment to self-determination and the large-scale United States military exercises in the Pacific should spark concern in the international community. The majority of the people of Guam did not support the militarization of their island but were powerless to oppose it. The military would soon occupy more than 30 per cent of the island, and new land was being obtained from the population "through acquisition". American companies were opening stores and expensive restaurants and beachfront and other pristine property was being snapped up. Chamorro families had begun to sell their land. The island's most vital resources were for sale and the United States continued to promote the investment potential of the island throughout Asia.

13. More foreign control of the island was making self-determination for the native population increasingly difficult. Their language, culture, political sovereignty and health had been sacrificed in the interests of United States military domination and economic control. Pollution caused by military activity had led to one of the highest rates of cancer and other deadly diseases in the world.

14. The United Nations must play a more active role in promoting the right of the Chamorro people to self-determination and decolonization. The Committee should send a fact-finding mission to Guam to document the current situation. The island also needed more resources for educational campaigns about self-determination and decolonization.

15. *Ms. Auyong withdrew.*

Question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/62/3, A/C.4/62/3/Add.2-6, Add.8-9, Add.17, Add.19-20, Add.23, Add.30, Add.34-36, Add.38, Add.43 and Add.48)

16. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Pleite (European Parliament) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

17. **Mr. Pleite** (European Parliament) said that, in October 2006, the European Parliament had sent an ad hoc delegation to visit Western Sahara but had been refused entry by the Moroccan authorities because some members of the delegation belonged to the Parliament's Friendship Group with Western Sahara, showing a clear lack of respect on the part of Morocco for the European Parliament. In 2002 and 2007, entry had also been refused to a group of Spanish elected officials and journalists, and a delegation of Scandinavian diplomats, respectively. Morocco denied entry to international observers because it wanted to hide its human rights violations and the virtual state of siege under which the Saharan people lived, and to suppress freedom of movement and expression. Seven members of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights had recently been arrested for participating in a peaceful demonstration and, in June, the police had brutally repressed peaceful demonstrations by Saharan students.

18. He deplored the signing, in 2005, of a fishing agreement between the European Union and Morocco because it included Western Saharan waters, thereby illegally conferring on Morocco the status of administering Power, with the right to exploit the area's resources. Morocco was, in fact, an occupying Power; the legal administering Power was Spain. Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) called for direct negotiations between the two parties aimed at a political solution guaranteeing the right to self-determination of the Saharan people. To date, however, Morocco had shown little real desire to resolve the conflict. As rightful administering Power, Spain must, in cooperation with the international community, ensure that a political solution was reached that guaranteed the Saharan people's right to self-determination.

19. *Mr. Pleite withdrew.*

20. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Basinet (actress/recording artist) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

21. **Ms. Basinet**, speaking in her personal capacity, said that for 30 years the majority of the Saharan people had lived in the most inhospitable corner of the Algerian desert while the remainder were subject to repression by the Moroccan authorities. The question of Western Sahara was one of Africa's longest unresolved conflicts and the United Nations had an

obligation to act to bring about a resolution. The Saharan people were strong and self-reliant but they needed help in order to resolve the political impasse. The refugees in the camps needed resources to educate their children and to promote entrepreneurship, for example through microcredit schemes. They needed medical and building supplies, basic necessities, solar-powered generators, computers, Internet access and a way to market what they produced. The political and microeconomic needs of the Saharan people could be met provided that the international community was willing to help.

22. *Ms. Basinet withdrew.*

23. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Ramos (American Association of Jurists) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

24. **Ms. Ramos** (American Association of Jurists) said that Morocco had repressed, incarcerated and tortured the Saharan people and she called on the Secretary-General to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Saharan prisoners. Decolonization must be carried out by means of a free and transparent referendum monitored by the United Nations and international observers. Spain should treat the question of Western Sahara as a question of decolonization in accordance with international law and the United Nations should protect the Territory's integrity and natural resources.

25. She called on the Special Committee to take note of the suffering of the refugees living in the Tindouf camps and expressed the hope that the current talks taking place between the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y del Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) and the Government of Morocco would pave the way for a referendum without preconditions.

26. *Ms. Ramos withdrew.*

27. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Bachir-Abderahman (Saharawi Youth Union) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

28. **Ms. Bachir-Abderahman** (Saharawi Youth Union) said that the Government of Morocco was systematically violating international law by preventing the Saharan people from exercising their right to self-determination. The right of the Saharan people to self-determination had been established in Security Council and General Assembly resolutions as

well as in agreements between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO. Although it had been agreed, as far back as 1991, that the Saharans should be given the opportunity to choose between independence and integration in a free, fair and transparent referendum, that referendum had yet to be held. Moreover, Morocco was now offering autonomy as the ultimate solution.

29. Since May 2005, Saharan students and youth had been attacked and detained by the Moroccan police and armed forces throughout Morocco and Western Sahara. It had been reported that some of the attacks had involved severe beatings and sexual abuse, and even harassment of hospitalized victims. On behalf of the Saharan youth she urged the United Nations to take immediate action to prevent further human rights violations in the occupied territories of Western Sahara.

30. *Ms. Bachir-Abderahman withdrew.*

31. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Lenz (Christ the Rock Community Church) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

32. **Ms. Lenz** (Christ the Rock Community Church) said that living conditions in Western Sahara had significantly deteriorated during 2007. Hunger was more widespread, educational opportunities were fewer and many young adults had been forced to leave their homes. More people had died simply because they had not received adequate medical attention. Those who had remained in their occupied homeland had become further removed from their cultural identity because Morocco continued to import its culture, language and identity into the Territory of Western Sahara. A referendum was essential to allow the Saharan people to determine their future and be released from their suffering.

33. *Ms. Lenz withdrew.*

34. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Boukhari (Frente POLISARIO) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

35. **Mr. Boukhari** (Frente POLISARIO) said that Morocco's obstruction and/or rejection of the various peace plans proposed over the years, together with its policy of violating human rights in the occupied Territory, was undermining negotiations and the credibility of the United Nations. Its latest proposal, concerning autonomy for Western Sahara, implied the precondition of considering the territory as an integral

part of Morocco. However, Morocco had no sovereignty over Western Sahara. The latter was a Non-Self-Governing Territory and its future must be decided by the people of the Territory.

36. On 10 April 2007, the Frente POLISARIO had submitted to the Secretary-General its own proposal stressing the need for a referendum on self-determination and offering Morocco the opportunity to discuss strategic relations.

37. The two parties had held two rounds of negotiations in the framework of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) and a third was scheduled for later that year. While the Frente POLISARIO had fully cooperated with the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy during those negotiations, the Government of Morocco had shown that it had no intention of complying with any United Nations resolutions aimed at securing the decolonization of Western Sahara. Moreover, its selective interpretation of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) — most recently at the Committee's previous meeting — had shown that it was not willing to enter into negotiations in good faith.

38. Recalling that the aim of the negotiations was to ensure that the Saharawi people were given the opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination and decide on their future themselves, he said that the third Frente POLISARIO was still hopeful that in the third round of negotiations Morocco would engage in the negotiating process in good faith.

39. *Mr. Boukhari withdrew.*

40. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Marcelli (international lawyer) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

41. **Mr. Marcelli**, speaking in his personal capacity, said that the application of the principle of self-determination to Western Sahara had been affirmed by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion of 16 October 1975 and by various United Nations resolutions. However, application of the principle would necessitate a referendum in which the population would be asked to choose between a variety of alternatives: independence, annexation to Morocco or autonomy. When registering the voters it would be important to bear in mind that the military occupation had considerably changed the composition of the resident population.

42. Finally he stressed that a peaceful solution to the question of Western Sahara was essential for the stability of the region as a whole. If the Saharan people did choose independence, it would be important for the Saharan State to establish cooperative links with all the States of the region based on the principles of cooperation and the peaceful resolution of international disputes.

43. *Mr. Marcelli withdrew.*

44. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Rocha Maqueda (Asociación de Amistad del Pueblo Saharaui de Extremadura) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

45. **Mr. Rocha Maqueda** (Asociación de Amistad del Pueblo Saharaui de Extremadura) said that the international community had not done enough to resolve the question of Western Sahara, and Moroccan and multinational companies continued to exploit the natural resources of the Territory in contravention of United Nations resolutions and international law. Moreover, the latest Moroccan proposal — the Moroccan initiative for negotiating an autonomy statute for the Sahara region — did not allow for the possibility of a referendum.

46. If the problem continued to fester, it might destabilize the entire region. Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) had made it clear that the Saharan people had the right to self-determination. He therefore called on the Government of Spain to support a just and fair referendum on self-determination.

47. *Mr. Rocha Maqueda withdrew.*

48. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Aurrekoetxea (Instituciones Solidarias con el Pueblo Saharaui a nivel del Estado Español) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

49. **Mr. Aurrekoetxea** (Instituciones Solidarias con el Pueblo Saharaui a nivel del Estado Español) said that Saharans were a peaceful people, intent on gaining their independence through negotiation because they still believed in the power of words. Despite having endured more than 30 years of suffering at the hands of Morocco, they remained steadfast in their quest for freedom and self-determination. However, they were not prepared to continue suffering indefinitely.

50. In order to avert a return to armed struggle, he called on the friends of Western Sahara, particularly Spain, which continued to have an obligation towards

Western Sahara as the administering Power, France and the United States to request the Security Council to consider the situation in Western Sahara under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations in order to force Morocco to comply with international law and bring about the independence of the Saharan people.

51. *Mr. Aurrekoetxea withdrew.*

52. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Alonso Rodríguez (Liga Española Pro-Derechos Humanos) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

53. **Mr. Alonso Rodríguez** (Liga Española Pro-Derechos Humanos) said that it was intolerable that the question of Western Sahara remained unresolved after 32 years. The dialogue between the parties initiated in Manhasset on the basis of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) offered an opportunity to resolve the conflict and the international community could not afford to allow those negotiations to fail.

54. The Spanish Government should take note that peace in Western Sahara and the plight of the Saharan people were of great concern to Spanish society, and it should not forget its historical responsibility in the conflict. In that regard, he called on all Western Governments and the Spanish Government in particular to contribute to the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in order to aid Saharan refugees.

55. His organization noted with great concern the large number of unexploded mines and explosive devices found throughout Western Sahara, including areas where military observers and vehicles of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) operated on a daily basis. Every month civilians and livestock were killed or injured by mines and the number was sure to grow should refugees begin to return.

56. *Mr. Alonso Rodríguez withdrew.*

57. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Moreno Navarro (University of Seville) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

58. **Mr. Moreno Navarro** (University of Seville) said that it was indisputable that the Saharan people were a nation with a unique historical, cultural and political identity that had been denied the right to self-determination. The question of Western Sahara would

have been resolved long ago had Spain not betrayed the Saharan people and signed the tripartite agreement with Morocco and Mauritania. While that crime had been perpetrated by the fascist regime of General Franco, no democratically elected Spanish Government had ever attempted to right that injustice.

59. Morocco's insistence that the conflict in Western Sahara was an internal matter was merely a pretext for its continued occupation of the territory. Security Council resolution 1754 (2007), and others before it, had affirmed the right of the Saharan people to freely decide their future in a referendum. The Moroccan autonomy proposal did not meet the requirements of a genuine referendum on self-determination. Such a referendum should offer two distinct possibilities: integration into Morocco or independence.

60. The civil resistance of the Saharan people continued to grow notwithstanding terrible police and military repression. The number of human rights violations had also increased and human rights advocates had repeatedly been denied entry into Western Sahara. Although the resistance activities had been totally peaceful, following the 1991 ceasefire, the younger generation of Saharans might be tempted to resort to violence if they felt that the international community had abandoned them.

61. The United Nations had been unduly tolerant of Morocco's behaviour and Morocco had interpreted that tolerance as tacit approval of its illegal occupation. Unlike Indonesia, Serbia and Iraq, Morocco had enjoyed total impunity; that impunity must end in order for justice and human rights to prevail.

62. *Mr. Moreno Navarro withdrew.*

63. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Peraita Lechosa (Seville Association of Friendship with the Saharan People) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

64. **Mr. Peraita Lechosa** (Seville Association of Friendship with the Saharan People) said that while Morocco had begun direct negotiations with the Frente POLISARIO, its flagrant violations of the human rights of the Saharan people continued.

65. Torture and other forms of inhumane treatment practiced by the Moroccan authorities had led to extensive loss of life and limb. Many Saharans had also been kidnapped and either imprisoned or banished from urban areas. The rights to peaceful assembly and

political organization were denied, and prisons were overcrowded.

66. He called for an end to the media blackout in Western Sahara; expansion of the mandate of MINURSO to include protection of the rights of Saharan citizens; the signature by Morocco of the principal international human rights instruments; cessation of the exploitation of the natural resources of Western Sahara; an investigation into the flagrant human rights violations committed by Morocco; the clearing of all landmines in Western Sahara; and the closure of the so-called "black prison" in Laayoune.

67. *Mr. Peraita Lechosa withdrew.*

68. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Quatrano (Osservatorio Internazionale Onlus) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

69. **Mr. Quatrano** (Osservatorio Internazionale Onlus) said that, while the Saharan people were engaged in a peaceful struggle for self-determination, the Moroccan authorities, by imposing a media blackout on Western Sahara, were trying to create the impression that the Saharan problem did not exist. Notwithstanding Morocco's claims to the contrary, the quest for self-determination was broadly supported by the people of Western Sahara and the sense of national identity was deeply rooted.

70. Morocco had responded by a comprehensive and sustained campaign of repression, brutality and torture. Judicial proceedings against militants did not conform to international standards. Trials were often conducted solely on the basis of police records and testimony; defendants were not allowed to present witnesses or evidence in their defence; and forced confessions bearing forged signatures were not uncommon. Moreover, the courts had never followed up on defendants' claims of torture. Sentences were severe and not proportionate to the crimes. Even international human rights observers were not exempt from Moroccan intimidation.

71. It was vital that a proper referendum be held. To that end, MINURSO should be given the additional mandate of safeguarding the civil and political rights of the Saharan people living in the occupied territories.

72. *Mr. Quatrano withdrew.*

73. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Stanley (RockFish Church) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

74. **Mr. Stanley** (RockFish Church) said that if the nations of the world had the power to enforce a free and fair referendum, then they had the authority to act in pursuit of that goal. Failure to take steps to ensure that a free vote was held in Western Sahara would not enable those nations to escape the consequences of their inaction.

75. While there were many problems in the world, the situation in Western Sahara was a disgrace. The Saharan people had been "killed" over and again by the broken promises and failed legislation of the international community. He implored the United Nations to decolonize Western Sahara.

76. *Mr. Stanley withdrew.*

77. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Teuwen (Oxfam Solidarity), took a place at the petitioners' table.*

78. **Ms. Teuwen** (Oxfam Solidarity) said that until such time as the Saharan people were able to exercise their right to self-determination, they deserved the assistance and protection guaranteed under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Convention on the Status of Refugees. Oxfam Solidarity continued to receive reports of human rights violations in the part of Western Sahara occupied by Morocco. Morocco was also not willing to acknowledge its responsibility for the Saharan refugees which it had forced into exile. Nominally the Saharan refugees living in Algeria in the Tindouf camps were protected by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and received assistance through the World Food Programme (WFP), but those organizations had failed to fully meet their commitments. Severe food shortages and consequent anaemia and malnutrition, especially among women and children in the camps, had been reported by both the Saharawi and the Algerian Red Crescent, which had urgently appealed for international donations. Her organization supported that appeal and urged the international community to fulfil its obligations until a just and durable solution was found.

79. *Ms. Teuwen withdrew.*

80. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Scholte (Defense Forum Foundation) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

81. **Ms. Scholte** (Defense Forum Foundation) said that the continuing conflict resulting from the failure of the United Nations to conduct the referendum on self-determination in Western Sahara had also forced almost 200,000 people to live as refugees in the Sahara desert, and subjected the Saharans living in occupied Western Sahara to killings, torture and beatings at the hands of Morocco, as documented by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and others.

82. Nevertheless, the Saharans had continued to advocate their right to self-determination non-violently and lawfully, and the Saharan leadership had pledged to abide by the outcome of a vote on self-determination. Most Moroccan citizens had no idea what was happening in Western Sahara because their Government jailed its own journalists and human rights advocates who tried to report on the issue, and had harassed international observers who tried to go to the Territory. Despite Morocco's past cruelty towards them, the Saharans had continued to pledge that, should they win in the referendum, the Saharan Republic would be a good neighbour to Morocco, as also to Algeria and Mauritania, all of which would be strengthened in their own fight against terrorism, proving that the democratic ideals and universal values for which the Saharans had struggled could lead to prosperity and peace, and fulfilling a great goal of the African Union: stability in the Maghreb and the chance to develop the region economically for the benefit of all residing there.

83. Saharans accounted for the bulk of the people still living under colonial rule, and the Committee should act aggressively to end the situation.

84. *Ms. Scholte withdrew.*

85. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Pinto Leite (International Platform of Jurists for East Timor) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

86. **Mr. Pinto Leite** (International Platform of Jurists for East Timor), speaking also on behalf of the Stichting Zelfbeschikking West-Sahara (Foundation for the Self-determination of Western Sahara), observed that the question of Western Sahara continued to be the main stumbling block to the eradication of colonialism and that Morocco continued to defy United Nations

resolutions and international law. Some countries had turned a blind eye to its illegal annexation of Western Sahara, and were now lending it a veil of legality by supporting the Moroccan proposal to give the Territory autonomy within the State of Morocco in exchange for recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over it, a proposal that recalled the case of East Timor in relation to Indonesia a decade earlier. In the Moroccan proposal, autonomy would be imposed on the Saharan people before they had had the chance to freely choose their status, contravening principle IX of General Assembly resolution 1541 (XIV).

87. In a recent conference held in The Hague on international law and the question of Western Sahara, jurists from 12 different countries had been unanimous in concluding that the occupation of Western Sahara and the exploitation of its natural resources were unlawful, and that a free and fair referendum in the Territory, according to the original United Nations/Organization of African Unity peace plan, was the only legal solution for the problem. He appealed to all States to take the principled position, to stop the pillage of the Saharan natural resources and support the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination.

88. *Mr. Pinto Leite withdrew.*

89. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Chauprade (Sorbonne University) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

90. **Mr. Chauprade** (Sorbonne University) noted that Morocco, without relinquishing its claim to sovereignty over that part of its national territory, had decided to give its Saharan inhabitants, by way of a referendum, control over their own affairs through legislative, executive and judicial institutions. That was not a concession to the Frente POLISARIO but a desire to advance the Saharans and balance their Moroccan character and their particular identity. That latest development was part of the ongoing democratic modernization of Morocco, in the Saharan province as in the rest of the country. Democracy consisted in asking the inhabitants of a country how they wished to live in the nation, not in asking them whether they wanted to leave the country. No other State faced with a separatist minority would do otherwise.

91. It should be asked what a POLISARIO State would be like. One need only imagine the Tindouf camps expanded into a police state, controlled by an

undemocratic and internally violent junta that was holding its population captive. It ought to be clear which of the two choices the Saharans would make. Given the geopolitical evolution of the region, where nomadic separatist movements were springing up in Mali and Niger as well as Morocco, the States of Saharan Africa would do well to reflect what the effect would be on their own unity and sovereignty if a small Saharan state with an Islamist minority were to be established. As a general rule, the Islamist movements supported themselves by trafficking in weapons, drugs and human beings and other types of organized crime, under the control of the various nomadic separatists like the Frente POLISARIO in Western Sahara.

92. National sovereignty, one of the basic principles of the United Nations, must hold strong against the threat of powerful transnational agents and local separatist movements dabbling in organized crime and religious fanaticism. Peace among peoples rested on the respect for sovereignty not on the fabrication of spurious identities.

93. *Mr. Chauprade withdrew.*

94. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bartolozzi (Regional councilman of Tuscany) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

95. **Mr. Bartolozzi** (Regional councilman of Tuscany) said that the complex conflict in Western Sahara had implications not only for the territorial integrity of Morocco but also for the future of the Maghreb and the stability of the entire Mediterranean basin. Morocco had recently proposed an autonomy statute for the Saharan region that offered a flexible basis for the ongoing negotiations and showed that Morocco was ready to seek a mutually acceptable final political solution in conformity with international standards. The proposal, which was welcomed in Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) as serious and credible, was preferable to the proposal of the Frente POLISARIO — which merely rehashed old positions — because it introduced the new element of autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty, both renouncing total integration of Western Sahara and preserving the nation's territorial integrity.

96. The Secretary-General had underscored the openness of the Moroccan initiative and his Personal Envoy had recently pointed out that self-determination did not necessarily have to lead to independence. The parties themselves were prepared to resume

negotiations, and the international community must press for a speedy resolution during the coming rounds. The continuing conflict was having serious repercussions: the Saharan refugees living in inhuman conditions for the past 32 years had, in desperation, begun to turn to clandestine terrorist or human trafficking networks to escape from the Tindouf camps, thus threatening the stability of the Mediterranean region.

Rights of reply

97. **Mr. Romero Martinez** (Honduras), referring to the United Kingdom's statement in right of reply at the previous meeting, said he wished to clarify that his own statement had been couched in general terms without reference to any particular situation among States.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

**General Assembly**

Sixty-second session

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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee
(Fourth Committee)****Summary record of the 4th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 10 October 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Mohamed (Sudan)
later: Mr. Maleki (Vice-Chairman) (Iran)

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other agenda items) (*continued*)

Hearing of petitioners (continued)

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07-53552 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 40: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other items) *(continued)*

Hearing of petitioners (continued)

Question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/62/3/Add.1, Add.7, Add.10, Add.11, Add.13, Add.15, Add.18, Add.21, Add.24, Add.25, Add.27, Add.31, Add.32, Add.33, Add.37, Add.39, Add.40, Add.41, Add.46, Add.47, Add.50, Add.51 and Add.53)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Lecoq (Deputy, Seine-Maritime, France) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

2. **Mr. Lecoq** (Deputy, Seine-Maritime, France), said that the recent negotiations between the Government of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) in the framework of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) had opened the door to finding a lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara in conformity with international law and he urged the international community to support the negotiations process.

3. Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara had lasted over 30 years and was threatening to undermine the stability of the region as a whole. Morocco's latest initiative for negotiating an autonomy statute for the Sahara region was aimed at depriving the Saharan people of their right to self-determination. In treating the question of Western Sahara as an internal matter, the Government of Morocco had refused to acknowledge the existence of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic. Given that the Government did not respect basic human rights in the occupied Territory, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) should step up its efforts to protect the Saharan activists.

4. *Mr. Lecoq withdrew.*

5. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Lord Newall (International Committee for the Tindouf Prisoners) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

6. **Lord Newall** (International Committee for the Tindouf Prisoners) said that the Moroccan initiative concerning autonomy should be welcomed as a

democratic proposal that had been largely endorsed by the international community. It was unclear why the Frente POLISARIO continued to insist on a referendum given that the United Nations had been unable to organize a referendum in the past. Instead of engaging in constructive dialogue the Frente POLISARIO had shown defiance towards the international community.

7. The Moroccan prisoners in the Tindouf camps had been kept in inhumane conditions for over 25 years and were considered the longest-serving prisoners of war in the world. Some had died from torture and malnutrition and had been buried in the desert; their families were calling on the Algerian authorities to allow them to repatriate the bodies. His organization called on the Government of Algeria to provide compensation to the prisoners, to respond favourably to the requests of the families of the disappeared, to bring to justice those responsible for human rights abuses and to give due consideration to the Moroccan initiative for autonomy.

8. *Lord Newall withdrew.*

9. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Motta (Associazione Jaima Sahrawi) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

10. **Ms. Motta** (Associazione Jaima Sahrawi), speaking as a member of the parliamentary friendship group with the Saharan people, said that the Italian Chamber of Deputies had recently voted to support the right to self-determination of the Saharan people in keeping with its long-standing commitment to the latter. Western Sahara was the only Territory in Africa which had not been given the opportunity to exercise its right to self-determination.

11. In order for the Organization to fulfil its obligations with respect to protection, the Secretary-General should gather impartial information on the health, education and socio-economic conditions of the Saharan people. The United Nations should act as advocate for the Saharan people both as regards their human rights and as regards exploitation of the natural resources of their Territory. Finally, she called for the formulation of appropriate programmes of assistance in order to promote economic and social progress of the Saharan people in keeping with the formulation of appropriate programmes of assistance to promote economic and social progress for the Saharan people in keeping with the spirit of General Assembly

resolution 60/112. Those actions would show the Saharan people that the international community had not forgotten about their right to self-determination.

12. *Ms. Motta withdrew.*

13. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Dauger (Association des Amis de la République Arabe Sahraouie Démocratique) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

14. **Mr. Dauger** (Association des Amis de la République Arabe Sahraouie Démocratique) said that although Morocco had attempted to justify its occupation of Western Sahara for more than 30 years, not a single Government recognized Morocco's claim of sovereignty over Western Sahara.

15. The Saharan people were suffering from that occupation: they lacked food and medical facilities and their Territory's natural resources were being pillaged by the occupying Power. Moreover, human rights activists were being subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture and inhumane and degrading treatment. The media had been prevented from reporting those crimes. His organization called on the General Assembly to facilitate the organization of a referendum on self-determination and, in the meantime, to protect the people by ensuring respect for their rights, as refugees, to receive adequate care and attention and their rights, as human beings, to express themselves freely.

16. *Mr. Dauger withdrew.*

17. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Paech (Member of the German Bundestag) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

18. **Mr. Paech** (Member of the German Bundestag), after briefly outlining the history of the issue, starting with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 16 October 1975, said that independent observers continued to denounce *inter alia* the suffering endured by refugees living in the Tindouf camps for the past 15 years, and the brutal repression of activists by the police.

19. He welcomed Security Council resolution 1754 (2007), which called upon the parties to enter into negotiations without preconditions in good faith and which upheld the right of the Saharan people to decide on their future. The Council had rejected the Government of Morocco's precondition that it would only negotiate on the basis of its initiative for

autonomy within Moroccan borders. The negotiations could not succeed unless the Government of Morocco acknowledged the right of the Saharan people to decide on their future through a free and transparent referendum in conformity with international law.

20. *Mr. Paech withdrew.*

21. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Terzi (Associazione Jaima Sahrawi) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

22. **Ms. Terzi** (Associazione Jaima Sahrawi) said that various local organizations in Italy had undertaken sensitization campaigns and established cooperation programmes aimed at alleviating the suffering of the Saharan people. Although the Government of Morocco had long been able to control information about what was going on in Western Sahara, by restricting access thereto, Saharan political activists were now making use of information and communication technologies to provide the international community with evidence of the acts of repression perpetrated by the Armed Forces. In May 2006, an UNHCR delegation had visited the occupied territories and the Tindouf refugee camps and had concluded that most of the human rights violations were the result of the Saharan people being denied their right to self-determination.

23. The continued failure to resolve the conflict in Western Sahara threatened to undermine the security and economic development of the region as a whole. She therefore called on the United Nations to step up its efforts to find a solution that respected the right of the Saharan people to self-determination.

24. *Ms. Terzi withdrew.*

25. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Assor (Surrey Three Faiths Forum) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

26. **Mr. Assor** (Surrey Three Faiths Forum) welcomed the European initiative to open a permanent base in Tindouf to oversee the distribution of aid and ensure it did not go astray. The United Nations should insist on a similar arrangement with the Frente POLISARIO and Algeria, in order to speed up much-needed assistance to the population of the Tindouf camps.

27. Finally, he expressed support for the Moroccan initiative for negotiating autonomy statute for the Sahara region (S/2007/206), which should lead to free

access and freedom of movement for the refugees in Tindouf. The international community must ensure that it was implemented so as to finally free the refugees from oppression.

28. *Mr. Assor withdrew.*

29. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. da Roeck (Belgian Interparliamentary Group for Peace in the Western Sahara) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

30. **Ms. da Roeck** (Belgian Interparliamentary Group for Peace in the Western Sahara) stressed the importance of respect for human rights and international legitimacy for the resolution of any international conflict and expressed concern at the reluctance of the Moroccan delegation to the Belgian Parliament to reveal any details about the new Moroccan proposal for a settlement in Western Sahara. Unfortunately, there was very little awareness in the international community, including on the part of politicians, about that conflict.

31. Those concerned about the situation of Western Sahara had an obligation to educate the world community, especially young people, about the will of the Saharan people, whether living under occupation or in exile, to assert their right to self-determination. The time for empty words was over. The international community must ensure that Morocco complied with international law, put an end to its repression of the Saharan people and allowed them to return to their homeland. In addition, she stressed that respect for human rights, democracy and international legitimacy must be the foundation for any plan for autonomy in the region.

32. *Ms. da Roeck withdrew.*

33. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Carloni (City Council Member) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

34. **Mr. Carloni** (City Council Member) said that the question of Western Sahara continued to affect relations among the States of the Maghreb. Unfortunately the referendum process had proved impossible to implement because of the intrinsic characteristics of the Saharan population. He therefore welcomed the holding of two rounds of talks between the two parties in Manhasset. Morocco had proposed to grant the Western Saharan people a large degree of autonomy within Morocco.

35. He regretted that the position of the Frente POLISARIO and Algeria remained rigid and uncompromising and stressed that reason and realism, based on the de facto situation in the region, required the Frente POLISARIO and Algeria to show more flexibility in order to end the suffering of the Saharan people in the camps at Tindouf. Algeria, in particular, as the host and unconditional supporter of the Frente POLISARIO must take advantage of the next round of talks to work towards autonomy for the Saharan people.

36. Turning to the humanitarian aspects of the conflict, he said that the population of the Tindouf camps was subjected to massive human rights violations, such as forced deportation to Cuba, torture, inhumane treatment and summary execution. Freedom of movement and expression were strictly controlled by the Frente POLISARIO and Algeria's military security forces severely punished dissent. Humanitarian aid sent to the camps was resold on the black market for the benefit of the Polisario leadership. While acknowledging the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for example in organizing family visits between Tindouf and the southern provinces of Morocco, he deplored the refusal of the Algerian authorities to allow that Office to undertake a census of the population in the camps.

37. He called on the international community to support negotiations between the two parties aimed at a referendum on self-determination leading to autonomy for the region. The international community must take steps to end the suffering in the camps and prosecute those responsible. The blockade around the camps must be lifted and the population allowed to return to their homeland in safety.

38. *Mr. Carloni withdrew.*

39. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Ait-Baala (Action Internationale Femmes) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

40. **Ms. Ait-Baala** (Action Internationale Femmes) noted that the main victims of the long conflict in Western Sahara were the civilian refugees in Tindouf. She therefore welcomed the recent talks held between the parties, in Manhasset, and expressed support for the Moroccan proposal for autonomy for the region, which had been described as "credible and serious" in Security Council resolution 1754 (2007).

41. Humanitarian concerns must be addressed immediately. In that connection, she drew attention to a press release, published on 9 May 2007 by Reporters without Borders, which confirmed the existence of slavery in the camps. The report had been prepared by two Australian journalists who had been detained by the Frente POLISARIO because they were investigating the situation of black members of the community and the existence of slavery. They had finally been released thanks to the intervention of representatives of MINURSO. She called on all humanitarian organizations working in the camps to denounce all such human rights violations that they witnessed.

42. The difference between the image the Frente POLISARIO tried to present and the cruel reality in Tindouf was striking. According to Baba Sayed, the brother of the founder of the movement, the role of the Frente POLISARIO intelligence service was to repress dissent and it had the right to arrest, interrogate, torture and assassinate with impunity. According to that same source, the situation of Saharans under the Frente POLISARIO was worse than that of those under Moroccan occupation for the Frente POLISARIO's main objective was to protect its own interests. The great majority of Saharans were disgusted with its management of their cause. Given the human tragedy in the camps, the international community must do everything within its power to protect the civilian population in the camps and, in particular, to ensure an end to the practice of slavery in the camps and bring those responsible to justice.

43. *Ms. Ait-Baala withdrew.*

44. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Warburg (Freedom for All) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

45. **Ms. Warburg** (Freedom for All) expressed grave concern at the human rights abuses perpetrated in the camps in Tindouf and called for an international commission of inquiry to investigate those abuses and punish those responsible.

46. The new Moroccan proposal for autonomy for the Sahara region was a welcome opportunity to ensure a peaceful resolution to the conflict. It would grant the refugees in Tindouf the same rights under a democratically elected autonomous government as those already enjoyed by Saharans living in Morocco and was supported by the overwhelming majority of

the Western Saharan people. The international community should support the proposal.

47. The fact that Saharan tribes had always been a nomadic people made their internment in the camps even more objectionable. Moreover, husbands and wives were separated, and had to request permission to see each other, and children were sent abroad — in violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child — as a means of enforcing compliance with the totalitarian exercise of power by the Frente POLISARIO. Freedom of movement did not exist within the camps. Fear, intimidation and arbitrary punishment pervaded the camps.

48. Humanitarian aid was resold by the Frente POLISARIO and their Algerian masters. Recent attempts by the Frente POLISARIO to sell water at exorbitant prices had prompted the Algerian army to intervene in order to avert an uprising. Refugees who had recently escaped from the camps had recounted increasing exploitation by the Frente POLISARIO leadership, including in the provision of food and milk for babies. Those were examples of how the Frente POLISARIO cruelly abused and exploited the refugees while deceiving and defrauding the international community.

49. Finally, she called on the Organization to help end the misery of the Saharan refugees by persuading Algeria and the Frente POLISARIO, which represented only a minority of Saharans, to negotiate freely with Morocco in the interests of bringing about a peaceful and prosperous future for all the people of the Maghreb.

50. *Ms. Warburg withdrew.*

51. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Chapaux (research fellow at the Université Libre de Bruxelles) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

52. **Mr. Chapaux**, speaking in his personal capacity, said that while the responsibility of the State that had invaded Western Sahara, as well as that of States assisting it, for denying the people of Western Sahara their right to self-determination was well established, third party states also bore some responsibility. The International Law Commission had underscored the peremptory character of the right to self-determination and the responsibility of all States to cooperate to bring to an end any serious breach of such a peremptory norm. The international community therefore had an

obligation to act with regard to the situation in Western Sahara.

53. While it might be argued that that obligation was an obligation of means and not of result only requiring States to make use of all available means to stop the breach, whereby the inadequacy of available means absolved States of their responsibility, he said that such an argument was incorrect. Adequate means were, in fact, available; the combined resources of the international community could easily bring about a settlement of the conflict. Moreover, absence of political consensus was not a justification for inaction since the central issue was not political but juridical. The international community had a legal obligation to act to bring to an end the breach of international law in Western Sahara; thus failure to do so was, in itself, a breach of international law.

54. *Mr. Chapaux withdrew.*

55. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Bahaijoub (Family Protection) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

56. **Ms. Bahaijoub** (Family Protection) recalling that, prior to 1912, Western Sahara had been an integral part of the Kingdom of Morocco, welcomed the Moroccan proposal for autonomy as a viable solution to the conflict. The Frente POLISARIO's call for a referendum was unrealistic given the differences between the parties concerning the eligibility of voters. In that context, she wondered why the Algerian authorities systematically refused to allow a census of the refugees in the Tindouf camps. If they were truly Saharans, they should be allowed to go wherever they wanted rather than being confined to a military zone. The continued confinement of a nomadic desert people was a violation of their human rights. The authorities should therefore authorize a census and the international community should give serious consideration to the merits of the Moroccan proposal. The latter offered Saharans the right to a leading role in the region, without discrimination or exclusion, and all the guarantees afforded by the Moroccan Constitution and would put an end to the suffering of the refugees in the Tindouf camps.

57. In the meantime, however, the plight of the civilian population in the camps must be addressed. For example, food supplies remained inadequate and there were reports that supplies were being misappropriated. In addition, the fate of the hundreds

of prisoners who had disappeared from the camps should be investigated and the remains of those who had been buried in the camps, including those buried near the Polisario headquarters at Rabouni, should be sent home so that their families could bury their dead in a dignified manner. The deafening silence of the Algerian authorities on that issue was a flagrant violation of international law. Finally, she welcomed the United Nations-sponsored Saharan family visits between Morocco and Algeria and hoped all genuine Saharans held in the camps would soon be allowed to rejoin their homeland without restrictions or intimidation.

58. *Ms. Bahaijoub withdrew.*

59. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ducarme (Belgian Parliament) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

60. **Mr. Ducarme** (Belgian Parliament) said that, pursuant to positions taken by his Government on the rights of the child, child labour and child soldiers, for the better part of the year he had been conducting a parliamentary investigation into charges that the rights of Saharan children were being violated in the Tindouf region and in Cuba, involving lengthy forced separation from the family from the earliest ages, deprivation of liberty, forced labour, political indoctrination and imposed military training.

61. The evidence provided had been sufficiently credible to prompt him to set up a humanitarian Belgian mission comprising a member of the Government, representatives of the various religions and specialists in the rights of the child. It, together with human rights NGOs, a team of psychologists and other parliamentarians, had begun to hear witnesses in Laayoune. Contacts had been made with Moroccan, Algerian and Cuban authorities and with representatives of the Frente POLISARIO to facilitate the gathering of evidence. Its report would be submitted the following year to the Belgian Parliament and various other bodies and they would decide if a further inquiry was needed.

62. *Mr. Ducarme withdrew.*

63. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Olarte Cullen (Former President, Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

64. **Mr. Olarte Cullen** (Former President, Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands), speaking as a former member of the Spanish Parliament and of the Commission that had overseen the process of decolonization of Western Sahara completed by Spain in 1975, reviewed the political developments and shifting allegiances in the Territory since then. The Canary Islands, which shared a history and extensive relations with their close neighbours, the Saharan people, had for many years budgeted substantial humanitarian aid for the inhabitants of Tindouf; that aid had gone to meet the people's basic needs and never to the military activities of the Frente POLISARIO.

65. To prevent the Saharans from resorting to violence, he urged the parties to the conflict to make a supreme effort to reach a peace accord; that would require meeting on an equal footing and a willingness to compromise. A possible stumbling block, however, would be any territorial ambitions that Algeria, which had in the past offered shelter to part of the Saharan people, might be harbouring. The Moroccan King had declared his intention of giving the Saharan people a broad degree of autonomy, which he had never done for any other part of his nation, which was extremely centralized, and the proposal had received nationwide political support.

66. If the parties to the conflict agreed and the United Nations approved, Spain would have to amend its Constitution to permit the granting of a statute of full autonomy to the Saharan people, giving them the kind of broad powers that came with free association status. The autonomy statute should provide for the three components of any democratic system — legislative, executive and judicial — and those basic institutions should be complemented by an ombudsman's office to safeguard human rights, an economic and social council and an advisory council. The respective constitutional powers of the Saharan region and the Moroccan State would have to be specified and there should be a separate Saharan treasury to ensure the region's maximum social and economic development. Finally, the draft statute should be submitted to a self-determination referendum.

67. *Mr. Olarte Cullen withdrew.*

68. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. El Moussaoui (Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs, Morocco) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

69. **Mr. El Moussaoui** (Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs, Morocco), reviewing the history of Western Sahara, recalled that recently Morocco, responding to the Security Council's call for a political solution to the conflict, had proposed an autonomy statute for the Saharans living in its territory that would allow them to administer their own affairs under Moroccan sovereignty and preserve national unity and territorial integrity. The Government had consulted the political parties and representatives of the population in a democratic, inclusive manner that guaranteed their approval of the concept of autonomy.

70. The Royal Advisory Council, comprising representatives of all the tribal, political and socio-economic components of the population of the Saharan region, had been set up in that context. Its mission was to propose steps for the return of all Saharans to the country and their reintegration and one of its first tasks had been to draft the autonomy statute. The President of the Council had participated in the Manhasset talks.

71. The autonomy being offered guaranteed that all Saharans, without discrimination or exclusion, would participate as appropriate in the regional as well as national institutions. Morocco had taken part in the latest rounds of negotiations in an open and conciliatory spirit and with a determination to reach a solution based on a self-determination referendum that guaranteed Saharan autonomy and safeguarded the interests of all the parties.

72. The latest elections had shown beyond a doubt that the Saharans wanted to be a part of the democratic process in Morocco. The Frente POLISARIO claimed that it wanted a self-determination referendum, yet it had set up a self-proclaimed Saharan Arab Democratic Republic on Algerian territory without taking into consideration the opinion of the majority of the authentic Saharans living in the Saharan territory.

73. To prolong the conflict would merely add to the sufferings of the Saharan brothers in the Tindouf camps and neighbouring areas. A desperate generation there was beginning to engage in weapons and drug trafficking, human trafficking and the creation of an Al-Qaida terrorist wing in southern Algeria. There was also the risk that Algeria's obstructionism would destabilize the Maghreb and the southern Mediterranean.

74. *Mr. El Moussaoui withdrew.*

75. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Fucito (Member, Naples City Council) took place at the petitioners' table.*

76. **Mr. Fucito** (Member, International Relations Commission, Naples City Council) said that Naples had, for centuries, been a reference point for the entire Mediterranean region and a crossroads for the people of North Africa; all its citizens coexisted peacefully. In that spirit, the City Council had in recent years welcomed Saharan children and had thus learned about conditions in the refugee camps. Naples has also awarded honorary citizenship to a Saharan leader imprisoned by Morocco for her ideas.

77. The United Nations must insist on holding an immediate referendum for the self-determination of the Saharan people. It must also extend the mandate of MINURSO to ensure the protection of individual human rights and the creation of an effective form of democracy in Western Sahara.

78. *Mr. Fucito withdrew.*

79. *Mr. Maleki (Islamic Republic of Iran, Vice-Chairman) took the Chair.*

80. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Abba Hemeida (student) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

81. **Ms. Abba Hemeida** (student), said that she had been raised in a refugee camp under the harshest of conditions and her father had been killed in the war with Morocco when she was two years old. Saharans living in Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara also suffered under the yoke of oppression. Men and women of all ages were unjustly imprisoned, tortured and humiliated by the Moroccan police. Their identity and culture were ridiculed and they were insulted with the vilest words. The violence of the Moroccan police was so great that Saharans were afraid to walk the streets.

82. Although the Moroccan occupation of the Saharan homeland had split the nation in two, one half living under occupation and the other in refugee camps, Saharans still clung to the dream that one day the long-awaited referendum on self-determination would be held and that the flag of a free Western Sahara would fly over its capital, Laayoune.

83. *Ms. Abba Hemeida withdrew.*

84. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Cervone (Christian Democratic Women International) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

85. **Ms. Cervone** (Christian Democratic Women International) said that the question of Western Sahara should have been resolved in 1975, when the International Court of Justice issued its advisory opinion. Unfortunately, Algeria continued to use the issue to undermine Morocco's territorial integrity. Accordingly, the refugees living in the Tindouf camps under the rule of the Frente POLISARIO continued to suffer. No amount of propaganda could mask the reality that the camps were a lawless "no man's land" where the smuggling of arms, cigarettes and clandestine immigrants thrived.

86. She was outraged that the Frente POLISARIO continued to send children to Cuba. While it was gratifying that they were being educated there, Saharan children, some as young as seven years old, were being forcibly taken from their families. By the time they returned home, some 20 years later they would have lost all ties to their families and culture. What was more, they returned home without a diploma or certificate to prove they had actually completed their studies.

87. The Moroccan proposal on autonomy, which was supported by the majority of the Saharan people, offered a unique opportunity for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Western Sahara and should be supported by the United Nations and all peace-loving countries.

88. *Ms. Cervone withdrew.*

89. **Ms. Hernández Toledano** (Cuba) strenuously denied the accusations made by various petitioners against her country. People were not deported to Cuba. It was Cuba's policy to offer scholarships to students from the Non-Self-Governing Territories and it reported each year on the offers of study and training facilities it had made. Currently there were over 500 Saharan students studying in Cuba of their own free will as reported in the document A/62/68/Add.1. Moreover, over 30,000 third-world students were currently studying in Cuba, free of charge and many more had done so since the beginning of the revolution, including over 30,000 Africans. Foreign students were required to return to their home countries as a condition of their acceptance. Cuba had made

great efforts to ensure that its academic degrees were internationally recognized.

90. Other Member States should be encouraged to follow Cuba's generous example.

91. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Errazti (Eusko Alkartasuna) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

92. **Ms. Errazti** (Eusko Alkartasuna) said that the right of the Saharan people to self-determination was guaranteed by international law. The autonomy proposed by Morocco was merely an attempt by that country to impede the exercise of that right. Morocco, despite its claims, had no legal right to exercise sovereignty over Western Sahara; it had assumed control of that territory by the use of force. The United Nations had never authorized the Moroccan occupation of that territory. On the other hand, the Frente POLISARIO was recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Saharan people.

93. The peaceful uprising of the Saharan people against their Moroccan occupiers had been met with an intensified campaign of repression, documented by numerous independent observers, including the United Nations and Amnesty International. Consequently, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) should increase the scope of its activities to include the monitoring of respect for human rights.

94. *Ms. Errazti withdrew.*

95. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. d'Origny took a place at the petitioners' table.*

96. **Ms. d'Origny**, speaking in her capacity as a private individual, reminded delegates that Morocco invaded Western Sahara in defiance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Spain was still legally responsible for Western Sahara as the administering Power and any business transactions with Morocco in respect of the territory only served to legitimize the illegal use of force.

97. Recalling that the Committee had been instrumental in securing a referendum for Timor-Leste resulting in the creation of the first new State of the twenty-first century, she called on Committee members to force Morocco to end its occupation and allow the Saharan people to exercise the right of self-determination.

98. *Ms. d'Origny withdrew.*

99. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. López García (University of Madrid) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

100. **Mr. López García** (University of Madrid) said that the history of Western Sahara and its people was a series of lost opportunities to peacefully decolonize that non-self-governing territory. The Moroccan proposal for negotiating an autonomy statute for the Sahara region would give the people substantial control over their own affairs in a decentralized and democratic Morocco. It represented the best opportunity to successfully complete the decolonization process and had already led to two rounds of negotiations in Manhasset.

101. While Morocco was to be commended for the general amnesty it had proposed, it should not wait for the successful conclusion of negotiations before putting an end to its repressive tactics. The Frente POLISARIO, for its part, should recognize that the autonomy proposed by Morocco was confirmation that its long struggle to free the Saharan people had been worthwhile, and that it was not simply a ploy to maintain the status quo, but rather the first step towards building a democratic and united Maghreb.

102. *Mr. López García withdrew.*

103. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Miranda (Emigration Committee of the Galician Nationalist a Bloc) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

104. **Ms. Miranda** (Emigration Committee of the Galician Nationalist a Bloc) said that the question of Western Sahara was not merely a humanitarian problem, but a legal and political one that the United Nations was obliged to resolve.

105. In order to guarantee regional peace and stability, Morocco, which was illegally exploiting the natural resources of Western Sahara, should return the territory to its rightful owners, the Saharan people. It should also be made to understand that a free and fair referendum on self-determination was not subject to negotiation; it was the only legitimate means by which the question of Western Sahara could be resolved.

106. *Ms. Miranda withdrew.*

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.



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Summary record of the 5th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 11 October 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Mohamad (Sudan)

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07-53758 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 40: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)

Hearing of petitioners (continued)

(A/C.4/62/3/Add.12, Add.14, Add.22, Add.26, Add.29, Add.42, Add.45, Add.49 and Add.52)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Martín Martín (Organización del Partido de Independientes de Lanzarote) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

2. **Mr. Martín Martín** (Organización del Partido de Independientes de Lanzarote), speaking on behalf of his majority political party on the Canary island of Lanzarote and as Vice-President of the island government, and recalling past repercussions of the Western Sahara conflict on the islanders of Lanzarote, said that because of their geographical proximity to the Saharan coast, the Canary Islands needed security guarantees. They therefore welcomed the resumption of negotiations between the two parties to the Western Sahara conflict. The proposal of the Moroccan Government offered a realistic political solution by providing for autonomous executive, legislative, judicial and other institutions for the Saharan region. The Government had pledged to take the steps needed, including amending its Constitution and decreeing amnesty, to secure a negotiated agreement. Of course, other Governments that used the Saharan people as an excuse for claiming supposed rights in the matter were at the same time unfortunately pursuing destabilizing policies.

3. The situation created in the last few months offered a historic opportunity for resolving the conflict. The United Nations should become actively involved in bringing the divisions in Saharan society to an end.

4. *Mr. Martín Martín withdrew.*

5. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Romero González took a place at the petitioners' table.*

6. **Mr. Romero González**, speaking in his personal capacity as a Spanish lawyer, said that the Moroccan autonomy plan offered a real opportunity to move the parties from military confrontation to the negotiating table, and would allow two generations of refugees to return to their ancestral lands and be reunited with other Moroccan citizens under the Crown as protector

of their rights and freedoms. Surely even the pro-independence segments of the Saharan population would see the advantage of a new round of negotiations on the autonomy plan in preparation for a referendum. The broad authority given to the autonomous institutions offered a high degree of regional self-management, greater than in many federal systems in other countries; the autonomous Saharan region would control its own finances and budget and possibly even some aspects of its foreign relations.

7. The Moroccan proposal left much latitude to the parties to the negotiations and remained open to revision in accordance with Moroccan legal procedures, and to future development in keeping with the region's needs. The Saharans should not fear losing any control for they stood only to gain by participation in both regional and national institutions of power. The broad amnesty proposed by the King was also evidence of his goodwill and determination to remove obstacles to peace and true national integration. It would be a mistake for the Committee itself not to support the promising Moroccan initiative.

8. *Mr. Romero González withdrew.*

9. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Puyol García (Fundación Pilotos 4x4 sin Fronteras) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

10. **Mr. Puyol García** (Fundación Pilotos 4x4 sin Fronteras) said that he had come not to theorize on the question of Western Sahara but to speak of his personal experiences among the Saharans in the deserts of Morocco, Mauritania and Algeria. His organization travelled the world in all-terrain vehicles, delivering small shipments of humanitarian aid supplies. He himself had gone twice with supplies to the Tindouf refugee camps in Algeria under the control of the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), in 2005 and 2006, and had recently crossed Morocco with a delivery to Saharans living in Nouakchott in Mauritania. He had nothing but praise for the Algerian and Moroccan authorities and police, who had unfailingly facilitated their expeditions through their territories so that the supplies could arrive safely at their final destination.

11. The Frente POLISARIO was another matter. He had later learned that the 2005 shipment of urgently needed food and medical supplies consigned to the Sahraoui Red Crescent had, with the complicity of the

Frente POLISARIO, been diverted and had never reached the Tindouf refugees or the valiant Cuban doctors staffing the camp hospital, who had been desperately waiting for the supplies. In his second attempt in 2006, the shipment had been impounded by the Frente POLISARIO for its own use. That was the first time in its history that his organization had been thus robbed. Furthermore, the Frente POLISARIO made a policy of denying visas to humanitarian expeditions from Spain — by his own group and others — wishing to bring aid to the Tindouf camps.

12. Having lived among the Saharan people in various parts of their desert, he could testify that their quality of life was best in Morocco, good in Mauritania, and very poor under the Frente POLISARIO. The Saharans he had met were unanimous in saying that they would not want to live under the leadership of a Frente POLISARIO government, but that they yearned instead to live as a people under some free and democratic system. He believed that one solution would be for Spain, as former colonial Power, to offer Spanish citizenship to all Saharans who wished it.

13. *Mr. Puyol García withdrew.*

14. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Strömdahl (Swedish Western Sahara Committee) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

15. **Ms. Strömdahl** (Swedish Western Sahara Committee) recounted the story of a Saharan student living in Morocco who had been beaten and blinded by the Moroccan police during a peaceful demonstration in favour of the Frente POLISARIO. She was a symbol of the brutal occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco and of the conditions of the Saharans captive there.

16. The people of Western Sahara were entitled to self-determination and self-government: there were three ways to achieve decolonization — free association, integration or independence — but Moroccan autonomy was no option. There was no administering Power for Western Sahara; that responsibility was in the hands of the United Nations and the Saharan people. Talks between the so-called parties to the conflict would not resolve the problem, for Morocco was an illegal occupier, not a party, and had no intention of ending its colonization. Her organization believed that the Security Council should expand and extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

(MINURSO); the Special Committee should be asked to send a visiting mission and organize the next regional seminar in Western Sahara; Spain should be asked to renew its responsibility for a just process of decolonization; and the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic should be recognized by all governments.

17. *Ms. Strömdahl withdrew.*

18. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bouh (Ex-Member, Frente POLISARIO Political Bureau) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

19. **Mr. Bouh** (Ex-Member, Frente POLISARIO Political Bureau) observed that, whereas General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) had wisely defined the limits of self-determination, the 30-year conflict in Western Sahara was due, in large part, to a selective reading of the resolution, whereby self-determination was considered synonymous with independence. In fact, it could just as easily lead to integration or autonomy.

20. Since, it had proven impossible to hold a referendum in Western Sahara, the only option left was a political solution negotiated between the parties. The Moroccan proposal for the autonomy of its southern province offered real hope, and it was a solution supported by the overwhelming majority of the Saharans through the Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs, their spokesman in past and future negotiations on the destiny of the Saharan region. The high participation of Saharans in the most recent elections, despite the boycott called for by the Frente POLISARIO, was another indication of popular support for the proposal. The international community must take that into account.

21. As an ex-member of the Frente POLISARIO leadership, he could personally attest to the fact that hundreds of Moroccan Saharans had been killed or tortured in the prison of Errachid in southern Algeria and that those who had practised torture for years with impunity were currently part of the Frente POLISARIO leadership. That leadership cared more about power than about the suffering of the Saharans living in the Tindouf camps. Ex-leaders like himself were asking that international aid be sent to the camps under international supervision to prevent its diversion and sale by some Frente POLISARIO authorities, as frequently happened.

22. The only way to solve the Sahara problem was through serious negotiations leading to some form of self-governance under Moroccan sovereignty. Failure now would mean increased insecurity, contraband activities, terrorism and clandestine immigration and that would threaten the stability of the Maghreb and the southern Mediterranean.

23. *Mr. Bouh withdrew.*

24. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Ebbi (Deputy, Moroccan Parliament) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

25. **Ms. Ebbi** (Deputy, Moroccan Parliament), speaking also as a member of the Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs and an ex-member of the Political Bureau of the Frente POLISARIO, noted that the Advisory Council was the body that had drafted the Moroccan autonomy proposal together with various other political and civil society representatives. The initiative would give wide powers of self-government to the Saharan population within the context of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and had been hailed by the international community and the Security Council as a solid basis for renewed negotiations. Settlement of the conflict would unite the Arab Maghreb and guarantee the peace, stability, prosperity, progress and security of the peoples of the region. The proposal had been the outcome of the broad democratic developments and the expanded public freedoms in Morocco over the last few decades. Some 64 per cent of the population of the Sahara region had voted in the recent elections, and Saharans were well represented in Parliament and at the municipal government. The proposal was viable and in accordance with international law and the international community should urge the parties to the conflict to reach a settlement based on it.

26. *Ms. Ebbi withdrew.*

27. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Khayati (Association de défense de la femme sahraouie) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

28. **Ms. Khayati** (Association de défense de la femme sahraouie) regretted that, at the insistence of certain countries motivated by geostrategic and political interests, the Saharan problem remained on the Committee's agenda, even though its decolonization had taken place in 1975, with the withdrawal of Spain and reunification with Morocco.

She also deplored the concerted efforts by Algeria to obstruct Morocco's exercise of its legitimate rights, through the creation of the Frente POLISARIO and promotion of the recognition of a pseudo-republic with none of the constitutive elements of statehood.

29. Speaking also, as a former inmate of the camps, on behalf of the Saharans living in the Tindouf camps, where there had been reports of flagrant violations of human rights, including atrocities committed against women, she said that, she wondered to what extent those camps could be considered refugee camps given that the lives and dignity of their inhabitants were under constant threat.

30. She noted that the current negotiations pursuant to Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) were the outcome of efforts by Morocco to find an acceptable solution to the conflict. In particular, the Moroccan autonomy proposal, which had been widely discussed by Moroccan, Saharan and foreign stakeholders and was supported by the Moroccan people, accorded extensive powers to the Saharan people, within the national sovereignty of Morocco. The Saharan people would be able democratically to manage their own affairs through their own legislature, executive and judiciary and would be granted the necessary financial resources for the development of their region. Stressing that the autonomy proposal offered a viable solution to the conflict, she urged the international community to support it.

31. *Ms. Khayati withdrew.*

32. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Morillas Gómez (Autonomous Community of Madrid) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

33. **Mr. Morillas Gómez** (Autonomous Community of Madrid) said that the problem of Western Sahara was having repercussions in: the Atlantic, the African interior and the Mediterranean. As noted by United States government and military authorities and echoed by Spain, the Maghreb had become a politically volatile and insecure region, providing a breeding ground for fundamentalism and the growth of terrorism.

34. Stressing that autonomy did not represent a viable solution and that only a free referendum on independence, as proposed in the peace plan for Western Sahara approved in Security Council resolution 1495 (2003), offered a means of resolving

the conflict, he warned that those opposing the proposal only wished to erode the notion of a separate Saharan identity and to keep Morocco languishing in poverty. Currently, Morocco's human development index value was a mere 0.631, lower than that of many other African countries. Poverty was encouraging illegal drug cultivation and growth of the dangerous phenomenon of "narco-fundamentalism". Moreover, given that 79 per cent of young Moroccans wished to emigrate, Morocco had become a centre for the industry of illegal immigration.

35. As Western Sahara remained a non-autonomous territory dependent on colonization, his community believed that funding for MINURSO should come from the revenue accruing to Morocco from its fishing and minerals operations in that territory; those mineral and fishery resources should be placed under United Nations protection. Finally, he urged that a free referendum on independence should be held.

36. *Mr. Morillas Gómez withdrew.*

37. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Plumley (United States-Western Sahara Foundation) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

38. *Ms. Plumley* (United States-Western Sahara Foundation) reviewing the history of the issue expressed regret that, more than 30 years after the 1975 ruling by the International Court of Justice that the people of Western Sahara had a right to self-determination, that ruling had still not been implemented. While the recent proposal by the Moroccan Government for a referendum on autonomy was welcome, it did not go far enough, since any referendum that did not include the option of independence failed to uphold the Saharawis' right to self-determination. Forcing the Saharawi people to accept a referendum on those terms would surely lead to conflict.

39. With regard to the close alliance between Morocco and many other countries, including the United States, which complicated efforts to solve the problem of Western Sahara, she pointed out that the issue of relations with Morocco must be kept separate from the right of the Saharawi people to determine their future and should not impede the application of international law.

40. *Ms. Plumley withdrew.*

Agenda item 36: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/62/23, chaps. VII and XII, and A/62/67)

Agenda item 37: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/62/23, chaps. V and XII)

Agenda item 38: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (*continued*) (A/62/23, chaps. VI and XII, and A/62/65)

Agenda item 39: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/62/68 and Add.1)

Agenda item 40: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*) (A/62/23 and A/62/128)

41. *Mr. Malmierca Díaz* (Cuba) noted with concern that, a mere three years before the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, many of the Organization's objectives in that area remained unfulfilled. The attempts by certain countries to cast aspersions on the decolonization cause, under the pretext of streamlining the work of the United Nations, should be soundly rebuffed.

42. The complete eradication of colonialism required the full support of the administering Powers. It was, worrying, therefore, that certain of those Powers still refused to cooperate with the Special Committee on decolonization. He hoped that the close cooperation between New Zealand and the Special Committee in dealing with Tokelau would serve as an inspiration to others.

43. Noting the importance of information programmes in the decolonization process, he said that the dispatch of visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the holding of regional seminars, such as that held in Grenada in May 2007, were among successful practices by the Special Committee in recent years. To that end, the working relationship between the Special Committee and the Department of Public Information should also be strengthened.

44. Drawing attention to the case of Puerto Rico, he recalled that earlier in the year, the member States of the Non-Aligned Movement had expressed their conviction, in the Special Committee that the question of Puerto Rico was a colonial issue and had appealed to the United States to take prompt action to enable the people of Puerto Rico fully to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. The Special Committee had again adopted a resolution on the matter by consensus. The people of Puerto Rico could count on Cuba's full support in their struggle to uphold their legitimate right to sovereignty.

45. Turning to the problem of Western Sahara, he said that it was vital that the negotiation process should continue, with a view to reaching a just, sustainable and mutually acceptable solution leading to the free self-determination of the people of Western Sahara and, in that context, he looked forward to a consensus resolution on the issue at the current session.

46. Cuba continued unreservedly to support the legitimate rights of Argentina in the Malvinas dispute and reiterated its call for a negotiated, just and definitive solution to the issue at the earliest possible juncture.

47. Reviewing the assistance rendered by Cuba, notwithstanding its own limited resources, to the Non-Self-Governing Territories through scholarships for students from those Territories, he called upon other Member States to provide similar educational and training opportunities. He also urged the specialized agencies and international institutions to support the Non-Self-Governing Territories, as called for by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2007/25.

48. **Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad** (Pakistan) regretted the lack of progress over the years in implementation of the Assembly's resolutions relating to decolonization. One encouraging development, however, had been the cooperation manifested by the Government of New Zealand in dealing with the issue of Tokelau; he hoped it would inspire other administering Powers to do likewise. It was also encouraging that consensus had been reached on a draft resolution on Western Sahara. His delegation welcomed the negotiation process taking place pursuant to Security Council resolution 1754 (2007).

49. He recalled the responsibility of the administering Powers to create conditions in the Territories that would enable their people to exercise

freely their inalienable right to self-determination. For their part, the United Nations and the specialized agencies had a particular responsibility to increase substantially their assistance to the Territories and to keep their populations fully informed of the options available to them with regard to self-determination.

50. Despite the General Assembly's repeated affirmations that colonialism in any form was incompatible with the Charter of the United Nations, the problem of the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation continued to plague the Middle East and his own region, south Asia. The denial of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people was the primary impediment to comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

51. Similarly, the unresolved Jammu and Kashmir dispute remained at the heart of conflict in south Asia. Noting that the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir had been recognized in resolutions of the Security Council, he welcomed the improvement in bilateral relations occasioned by the peace process entered into by Pakistan and India and expressed his conviction that a peaceful settlement responding to the aspirations of the Kashmiri people would usher in a new era of mutual trust and cooperation in south Asia.

52. **Mr. Kapambwe** (Zambia), speaking also on behalf of the members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that, being themselves products of decolonization, they strongly supported the process of decolonization in Western Sahara. Accordingly, they were pleased that the negotiations called for in Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) had begun.

53. The countries of his region sympathized with the plight of the people of Western Sahara. SADC members had learned some useful lessons from their history. They had learned, that any authority built on injustice or imposed against the will of the people was bound to collapse, that there was no force strong enough to break the will of a people seeking their freedom and, that where injustice and subjugation reigned, both the oppressor and the oppressed became victims, as the prisoners of hatred, fear and retribution. Accordingly, they hoped that their own experiences might inspire Morocco and Frente POLISARIO to reach a lasting settlement that would bring peace, harmony and development to both their peoples.

54. **Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom) said that her Government, as administering Power for 10 Non-Self-Governing Territories, gave every help and encouragement to those Territories which wished to proceed to independence, where that was an option. Her Government and its overseas territories continued to work towards the shared goals of security, stability and sustainable political and economic development, democracy, good governance and the rule of law. The ninth annual meeting of the Overseas Territories Consultative Council, a forum for dialogue between democratically elected Chief Ministers from the Territories and her Government, would be held in London in December.

55. Her Government carefully considered all proposals for constitutional change received from the Territories. The latter had been invited to review their constitutions and propose changes to modernize them. New constitutions had been agreed and come into force in the Turks and Caicos Islands, Gibraltar and the British Virgin Islands. In addition, negotiations were under way with representatives of Montserrat and the Cayman Islands.

56. The United Kingdom's support for the Territories focused on local capacity-building and sustainable development. The funding provided had improved governance and political and economic transparency, enhanced security, reduced vulnerability to natural and non-natural disasters, encouraged diversified development and promoted environmental management. Her Government would continue to support the Territories in their efforts to strengthen relations with the European Commission and to improve their access to the trade and development provisions of European Council Decision 2001/822/EC on the association of overseas countries and territories with the European Community.

57. **Mr. Kumalo** (South Africa), recalled that no regional or international organization had recognized Morocco's claims of sovereignty over Western Sahara and that Morocco's territorial claims had been rejected by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinions of 16 October 1975. He therefore welcomed the negotiations initiated between the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco pursuant to Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) and hoped both parties would continue negotiating without preconditions and in good faith with a view to achieving a mutually acceptable political solution that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

58. As a member of the Security Council at the time the resolution was adopted, his delegation could confirm that the Council had taken note both of the proposals submitted by the Frente POLISARIO and of that submitted by Morocco; accordingly, neither party should attempt to claim that the Council preferred one over the other.

59. The Moroccan proposal on autonomy would impose a unilateral solution rather than allowing the Saharan people to hold a referendum to decide their destiny, whether independence, integration or autonomy; it could not, therefore, be said to satisfy the right to self-determination. Furthermore, it had been submitted after two years of stagnation in the peace process brought about by Morocco's rejection of the Peace Plan for Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara (Baker Plan) which had been endorsed by the Security Council.

60. His delegation was concerned at reports of human rights atrocities committed against Saharans in the occupied territories and called on the Secretary-General to make public as soon as possible the most recent report and recommendations of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation in Western Sahara. Those human rights violations stemmed from the non-implementation of the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, as had been confirmed by the Office of the High Commissioner in the past.

61. His delegation hoped the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic and the Kingdom of Morocco would resolve their differences, and reiterated its concern that Western Sahara continued to be listed as a Non-Self-Governing Territory. It therefore welcomed the submission of a consensus text for a draft resolution on the situation in Western Sahara.

62. **Mr. Natalegawa** (Indonesia) noted that the situation of some Non-Self-Governing Territories remained unresolved. The international community must show a renewed commitment to finishing the decolonization process. To that end, all administering Powers should follow the example set by New Zealand; it had cooperated most constructively with the Organization on the question of Tokelau. Until decolonization issues were entirely resolved, all Member States and United Nations bodies and agencies should continue to pursue an innovative and proactive approach adapted to each Territory.

63. All options for self-determination should be considered, for example, 'by organizing regional seminars on self-determination; in addition, awareness-raising activities for the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories should be enhanced. He commended the efforts of the Organization to disseminate printed and electronic information on decolonization issues but said more could be done to ensure that those materials reached their target audience.

64. With regard to the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), he urged the parties to take advantage of the good relationship that currently existed and to resume negotiations with a view to achieving a peaceful and negotiated settlement based on the principle of territorial integrity and the best interests of the Islands' population.

65. Turning to Western Sahara, he welcomed the resumption of direct talks between the parties to the conflict in accordance with Security Council resolution 1754 (2007). All parties should act in good faith and play a constructive role with a view to achieving a lasting and mutually acceptable solution. Finally, he stressed that all Member States, as well as the Organization, had a role to play in ensuring progress towards decolonization. His delegation remained committed to that goal.

66. **Mr. Gebreel** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) expressed disappointment at the fact that, despite universal acknowledgement that self-determination was an inalienable right, the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was about to end without noticeable progress having been made in the implementation of the plan of action. He therefore urged all administering Powers to take steps to implement the Declaration on Decolonization and related General Assembly resolutions and he further urged the States concerned to stop using the Territories under their administration for military purposes.

67. Recalling the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, he said that both the Palestinian people and the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories were being denied the right to self-determination because the United Nations was unable to apply international law.

68. **Mr. El-Sherbini** (Egypt), noting that the decolonization process had yet to be completed, reaffirmed the importance of implementing the right to

self-determination pursuant to Article 73 of the Charter. To that end, the Organization and all Member States must renew their commitment to the goal of decolonization and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and take whatever measures were needed to assist Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination. In accordance with the spirit of General Assembly resolution 55/146, declaring the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the right of all colonial peoples to self-determination must be reaffirmed. There should be strengthened communication between the Special Committee and the Department of Public Information (DPI) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) in order to provide information about methods and options for self-determination in the Territories.

69. More visiting missions of the Special Committee should be sent to Non-Self-Governing Territories to consult with their peoples on self-determination. That would contribute to the development of a comprehensive vision for the Organization's decolonization efforts and he called on all administering Powers to cooperate fully with such missions. The administering Powers must also provide the Special Committee with all relevant information on the overall situation in the Territories they administered pursuant to relevant General Assembly resolutions and article 73 *e* of the Charter.

70. The right of colonial peoples to manage their natural resources must be reaffirmed and any misuse of those resources by the administering Power should be condemned; the cultural identity of colonial peoples should likewise be protected and preserved. Administering Powers must refrain from any activities that adversely affected the interests of the peoples of the Territories and ensure the development of those Territories based on the specific needs of each people. Closer contacts should also be encouraged between the Special Committee and the Economic and Social Council with a view to strengthening economic and social development cooperation.

71. The eradication of colonialism would require further strengthening of the principles of liberty, democracy and equality among nations and an unwavering commitment to the inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination and the end of foreign occupation of their territory, without exception. His

delegation would continue to support the efforts to eradicate colonialism.

72. **Ms. Ithete** (Namibia), welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Western Sahara (A/62/128) and expressed the hope that the negotiations between the parties to that conflict initiated pursuant to Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) would lead to a mutually acceptable political solution and provide for self-determination for the people of Western Sahara.

73. She expressed concern, however, at a proposed solution that would deny the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and legalize the occupation of Western Sahara. Any attempt to depart from the Baker Plan could unnecessarily prolong the suffering of the population and even lead to the resumption of hostilities. Her delegation supported all relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions aimed at the holding of a free and fair referendum and urged the Government of Morocco to recognize the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination.

74. With regard to allegations of human rights violations in Western Sahara, she urged the Security Council to give MINURSO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights a mandate to monitor the human rights situation. Her delegation was also concerned about the cycle of violence in the Middle East and the suffering of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation; the Palestinian people deserved the right to an independent and sovereign State in which they could live in peace.

75. **Mr. Mokgothu** (Botswana), reaffirmed that the question of Western Sahara was an issue of decolonization and said that the people of that Territory had a fundamental right to self-determination. Any nation that denied the right of another people to freedom, justice and dignity undermined the very purposes of the United Nations.

76. He welcomed the readiness of the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to enter into negotiations and commended the work of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General in that regard. The parties should approach the negotiations in a spirit of tolerance, compromise and political will to reach an agreement on a just, balanced and democratic outcome, in accordance with the wishes of the international community. His delegation's support for the

negotiations was in keeping with its strong belief in the peaceful settlement of disputes.

77. Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) called upon the parties to enter into negotiations without preconditions with a view to achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution and reaffirmed the validity of all previous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on that issue. Until such time as a political settlement was achieved, the United Nations had an obligation to ensure that the rights of the people of the Territory were protected. Whatever the people of Western Sahara decided — in a democratic process — was best for them, whether autonomy, integration or independence, their decision must be respected.

78. **Mr. Khair** (Jordan) reaffirmed his country's commitment to the right of all peoples to independence and self-determination and said that decolonization should remain one of the priorities of the United Nations.

79. Recalling that the administering Powers were required by the Charter of the United Nations to ensure the political, economic, social, and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories under their administration, he stressed that Member States should attach the same importance to the economic and social aspects of decolonization as to its political aspects. Thus the administering Powers should continue to provide the Secretary-General with economic, social and educational statistics on the Territories under their administration and make all effort to speed their economic and social development.

80. The United Nations and its specialized agencies, particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), should ensure that sufficient resources were allocated to fund expansion of the programmes which assisted those Territories. In addition, those specialized agencies and programmes should support the efforts of those Territories aimed at combating drug trafficking, money-laundering and other criminal activities.

81. **Mr. Moteetee** (Lesotho) was disheartened that progress on decolonization remained slow despite the fact that the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was coming to an end. He hoped that it would not be necessary to declare a third decade. The question of Western Sahara should have

been resolved long before. As far back as 1985 the Assembly had reaffirmed, in resolution 40/50, that the question of Western Sahara was a question of decolonization which remained to be completed on the basis of the exercise by the people of Western Sahara of their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

82. His delegation was concerned by reports of violations of the human rights of the Saharan people and called on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to publish a report in that regard.

83. However, his delegation was encouraged by the start of direct negotiations between the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco under the auspices of the United Nations, as called for in Security Council resolution 1754 (2007). Both parties should negotiate in good faith, with a view to realizing the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination, including to an independent State if they so wished.

84. **Mr. Gregoire** (Dominica), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that decolonization was the unfinished business of the United Nations and it was essential for Member States to muster the political will to fulfil the decolonization mandate.

85. The member States of CARICOM had always recognized that decolonization of the Caribbean Territories was an integral part of the wider regional integration process. To that end, they had granted most of those Territories associate membership in the Community. Several Territories were also members or associate members of a variety of CARICOM institutions, including the Caribbean Development Bank and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency and some also shared a currency with independent CARICOM States through the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank.

86. Interaction with the international community served to prepare small island territories to assume full self-government. CARICOM therefore favoured the participation of the Caribbean Territories in relevant programmes of the Economic and Social Council.

87. In order to successfully conclude the decolonization process, it was necessary to perform analytical studies on the prevailing political conditions in the Territories, as recommended in the plan of action

of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. That recommendation notwithstanding, the situation in only one Territory, Tokelau, had been reviewed thus far. In that connection, CARICOM reiterated its endorsement of the Plan of Implementation of the Decolonization Mandate 2006-2007, contained in document A/60/853, which identified action to be taken by the relevant United Nations bodies, administering Powers and other mechanisms.

88. CARICOM also reaffirmed its support for the achievement of self-determination for the people of Western Sahara and commended the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for their role in facilitating the ongoing negotiations between the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco aimed at achieving a just and final settlement to the question of Western Sahara.

89. **Mr. Rewaka** (Gabon) said that his delegation remained committed to the principle of multilateralism in international relations and to the central role to be played by the United Nations. The Organization contributed greatly to the decolonization process, particularly in Africa and it must continue its efforts if the goal of the eradication of colonialism was to be reached by 2011.

90. With regard to the question of Western Sahara, he joined with other delegations in welcoming the recent Moroccan proposal for autonomy in the Sahara region as well as Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) which recognized the serious and credible efforts of Morocco and called on the parties and neighbouring countries to enter into negotiations, with a view to achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution. All Member States had an obligation to support these negotiations, which offered the best hope for resolving that long-standing conflict.

91. **Ms. Mujuma** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that Member States should redouble their efforts to complete the decolonization process and called on the administering Powers to cooperate unconditionally with the Organization in implementing the Declaration on Decolonization and the other relevant resolutions.

92. In that connection, she said that the substantive progress made by Tokelau was a positive example of commitment to self-government. She welcomed efforts to hold a second referendum on free association and hoped that its anticipated success would spur the self-determination efforts of the remaining Territories.

93. Concerning Western Sahara, she said that the logical and lasting solution to the conflict was self-determination for the Saharan people. In that connection, she hailed the start of direct negotiations between the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco, as called for by Security Council resolution 1754 (2007), and encouraged the parties to continue negotiating in good faith and without preconditions.

94. Recalling the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the refugee camps in Western Sahara, her delegation called for an end to human rights violations and urged all parties to cooperate in facilitating the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Right of reply

95. **Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom) speaking in exercise of the right of reply, in response to remarks made by the representatives of Cuba and Indonesia on the issue of sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, said that the United Kingdom's position on the issue was well known and had been reiterated on 1 October 2007 by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom had no doubts about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. There could be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands unless and until such time as the islanders so wished.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.



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Sixty-second session

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 6th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 15 October 2007, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Mohamed (Sudan)

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- * Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 40: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other items) (continued)

Hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and petitioners

Question of Gibraltar (A/C.4/62/2)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Caruana, Chief Minister of Gibraltar, took a place at the petitioner's table.*

2. **Mr. Caruana** (Chief Minister of Gibraltar) said that the people of all Non-Self-Governing Territories had the inalienable right to decolonization by self-determination, which was the only principle applicable in the decolonization process under the Charter of the United Nations and international law. The contention by some Member States that the right was extinguished by the mere existence of a sovereignty dispute was absurd. Moreover, despite efforts of the Chairman of the Special Committee on decolonization to prevent them from doing so, those same Member States had secured the inclusion, in the conclusions and recommendations of regional seminars organized by the Special Committee, of statements to the effect that listed Non-Self-Governing Territories that were the subject of a territorial claim by neighbours could be decolonized by means other than self-determination, and that where such a dispute existed the normal principles and work of the Special Committee did not apply.

3. Worse still, the Member States in question had attributed that view to the participants in the regional seminars, even though none of the representatives of the participants had expressed that view. The inclusion of that view in the reports of the seminars amounted to manipulation of the drafting committee. He urged the Chairman of the Fourth Committee and the Secretary-General to look into the matter.

4. The argument that the principle of territorial integrity applied in the case of Gibraltar was erroneous. Gibraltar had not been a part of Spain for over 30 years and therefore the exercise of Gibraltar's right to self-determination in 2007 in no way disrupted the integrity of Spain's territory. The principle of territorial integrity existed to protect the integrity of a

State's territory. It could not properly be invoked to preserve a claim to a neighbouring territory, still less to extinguish the right to self-determination of a colonial people.

5. In November 2006, the people of Gibraltar had voted in a referendum organized entirely by the Gibraltar Government, with no participation whatsoever of the United Kingdom Government, to accept a new constitutional relationship with the United Kingdom. The new constitution gave Gibraltar complete self-government except in matters relating to foreign affairs and defence; was not one of a sovereign independent state because the people of Gibraltar, for various reasons, did not believe that independence was the best option for their territory.

6. Independence was no longer the clear-cut concept it had been when the prevailing United Nations decolonization doctrines had been adopted. Such concepts evolved over time and the United Nations must adapt its jurisprudence to accommodate such evolution. Many independent countries gave up some of their cherished independence to collective regional decision-making structures. For example, Spain and other countries did so as Members of the European Union. The United Kingdom had much less power over the affairs of Gibraltar than the European Union had over Spain's national affairs. Given their own countries' histories he could understand that some representatives might doubt that the outcome of the Gibraltar referendum reflected the genuine, freely expressed will of the people of Gibraltar but he assured the Committee that it was.

7. The Committee's criteria for removing a territory from its list of Non-Self-Governing Territories had never been adapted to evolving circumstances or the special needs of the few remaining Territories. He agreed with the Chairman of the Special Committee that decolonization methods must be flexible and take account of the special circumstances of each Territory. That was the only way forward.

8. Contrary to the claims made by some external critics, the United Kingdom Government had no powers whatsoever, executive or legislative, in or over Gibraltar. The power to pass laws for Gibraltar — exercised rarely and always in consultation with the people — was vested in Her Majesty the Queen solely in her capacity as Queen of Gibraltar, not as Queen of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Governor

functioned solely as the representative of the Queen of Gibraltar, not as the representative of the United Kingdom, and to the extent that, as a matter of separation of powers, the constitution continued to allocate powers to him, he exercised them solely in that capacity. As borne out at the highest levels of the United Kingdom judicial system, the United Kingdom had neither the power nor the ability to act like an administering Power in Gibraltar, nor did it wish to do so.

9. Gibraltar should therefore be removed from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories and the United Kingdom should accordingly be relieved of its reporting obligation in connection with Gibraltar under the Charter. That was the wish of the people of Gibraltar.

10. Spain's territorial sovereignty claim over Gibraltar was a totally different and separate issue from the decolonization issue. Spain confused the two issues at the United Nations. The people of Gibraltar would never accept bilateral negotiations over sovereignty between the United Kingdom and Spain, and the United Kingdom was committed not to negotiate or discuss the issue with the Government of Spain against the people's wishes.

11. The new Trilateral Forum for Dialogue was functioning well and the initial agreements reached in September 2006 were being successfully implemented. The Gibraltar Government was fully committed to the Forum and to building constructive bridges with Spain based on mutual respect. The Forum could create a favourable climate for discussion only if it recognized the supremacy of the wishes of the people of Gibraltar in all issues.

12. *Mr. Caruana withdrew.*

13. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bossano, Leader of the Opposition, Parliament of Gibraltar, took a seat at the petitioner's table.*

14. **Mr. Bossano** (Leader of the Opposition, Parliament of Gibraltar) said that in the recent election campaign in Gibraltar his party had pledged to conduct a public information campaign covering the three principles for achieving self-government enunciated in General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV) and the fourth arising from the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the

Charter of the United Nations contained in General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV). A consultative referendum would have followed to establish the strength of support for each option had they all been available.

15. In 2006, the United Kingdom had indicated that it regarded the adoption of the new constitution of Gibraltar as an exercise of the right of self-determination by the people of Gibraltar and that the approved constitution would entail a modern and mature relationship between the United Kingdom and Gibraltar.

16. Spain's position had been that the referendum represented merely the modernization of Gibraltar's relationship with the United Kingdom and that neither the referendum nor the constitution had any effect on the decolonization question. Spain had also predicted that the decision recommended every year to the General Assembly would not change, and indeed it had not.

17. Self-determination meant that the people of a colony were able to choose their preferred decolonization option and assume a new international status whereby they enjoyed a full measure of self-government. Having a more modern relationship with the administering Power was not the same as being decolonized. The people of Gibraltar did not accept the United Kingdom's argument that the outdated criteria for decolonization applied by the United Nations constituted the impediment to Gibraltar's decolonization. If the United Kingdom considered that necessary to modernize the criteria in order for Gibraltar to be decolonized, it should propose amendments to that effect that would apply not just to Gibraltar, but to all remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories.

18. If the General Assembly at its current session adopted a decision concerning Gibraltar that was the same as, or similar to, the decision taken at previous sessions and the United Kingdom supported that decision, the administering Power would, in fact, be abandoning its commitment that the 2006 referendum had constituted an exercise of the right of self-determination. The people of Gibraltar were entitled to learn where they stood under international law from an independent source, and the United Nations was the only independent source available to them.

19. *Mr. Bossano withdrew.*

Agenda item 36: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/62/23, chaps. VII and XII, and A/62/67)

Agenda item 37: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/62/23, chaps. V and XII)

Agenda item 38: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (*continued*) (A/62/23, chaps. VI and XII, and A/62/65)

Agenda item 39: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/62/68 and Add.1)

Agenda item 40: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (*continued*) (A/62/23 and A/62/128)

20. **Ms. Rodríguez de Ortiz** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that it was regrettable that the questions of the Malvinas Islands and Puerto Rico had not been resolved. Her delegation reiterated its position that the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands formed an inalienable part of the Territory of Argentina, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), paragraph 6. In such a case, the principle of self-determination did not apply, since the populations of the islands in question had been installed by the occupying Power. The question of Puerto Rico had not been resolved because the United States had not made it possible for the Puerto Ricans to exercise their right to self-determination and independence. With regard to Western Sahara, it reiterated its position that the Saharan people should be allowed to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. The conflict in Western Sahara threatened to destabilize the region as a whole and to undermine the Organization's credibility.

21. Her delegation welcomed General Assembly resolution 61/130, which reiterated the need for the eradication of colonialism, as well as racial discrimination and violations of basic human rights, and which called upon the administering Powers to take all necessary steps to enable the peoples of the

Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination, including independence.

22. **Mr. Ondo Matogo** (Equatorial Guinea) said that his delegation regretted the ongoing dispute between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) given that the people at the centre of the dispute shared common values, traditions and culture. The initiative undertaken by the Kingdom of Morocco represented an important step forward in finding a lasting solution and had facilitated the adoption of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007). It was important that the international community should support that resolution.

23. **Mr. Nyowani** (Zimbabwe) said that his delegation strongly supported Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) and the inalienable right of the Saharan people to self-determination and independence. It welcomed the initiatives of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy aimed at finding a lasting solution and urged the parties concerned to enter into negotiations in good faith.

24. **Mr. Oraon** (India) said that, even in the new century, the Organization continued to grapple with the vestiges of colonialism, a bygone system that ran counter to its fundamental principles. The United Nations approach to the task ahead must blend urgency and activism with sensitivity and circumspection, taking into account — on a case-by-case basis — the needs of the people of the Territories, their special circumstances, their political aspirations and their stage of development. It was crucial to inform those people of the legitimate political options available to them, namely, independence or free association or integration with a State.

25. Two important tools for remedying a lack of information in the course of decolonization were the visits of United Nations missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories, which needed the full cooperation of administering Powers, and the holding of regional seminars by the Special Committee; and it might be useful to combine the two as a way of obtaining first-hand information on local conditions and ascertaining the wishes of the people involved.

26. The role of the administering Powers was an important one, and each should work in a positive spirit with the Special Committee to tailor specific action plans for the Territories for which it was

responsible. The referendum held in Tokelau was one such example of partnership. The Chairman of the Special Committee had rightly stated that the focus should be on producing a plan of implementation for the wider United Nations system, so as to complete decolonization by 2010. As a founding member of the United Nations and of the Special Committee, India stood in solidarity with other erstwhile colonized peoples and nations.

27. **Mr. Virella** (Spain) said that the question of Gibraltar was a priority in Spain's foreign policy and that the discussions at the Caribbean regional seminar had shown that the mandate for the decolonization of Gibraltar and the claims to sovereignty were inseparably linked. It was regrettable that no tangible progress had been made since the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

28. Constitutional reform did not have any bearing on the decolonization process. Decolonization should come about as the result of negotiations between Spain and the United Kingdom, taking into account the interests of the people of Gibraltar. The principle of self-determination was not applicable to the question of Gibraltar because of the dispute over sovereignty. The claim that the Government of the United Kingdom would not reach an agreement on the question of sovereignty against the wishes of the people of Gibraltar should not serve as an excuse for avoiding negotiations. The two Governments had a commitment to pursue bilateral negotiations in accordance with General Assembly resolutions adopted since 1965 and the agreement made at the 1980 meeting in Lisbon. His Government would continue to work in the trilateral forum for dialogue towards resolving issues of local cooperation aimed at improving the social well-being and economic development of the inhabitants of Gibraltar and the isthmus territory. His delegation hoped that the forum would establish a climate of cooperation for resolving the dispute.

29. **Mr. Kafando** (Burkina Faso), said that Morocco's initiative for negotiating the autonomy of the Western Sahara, the adoption of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007), and the two rounds of Manhasset talks had provided a glimmer of hope, as did the forthcoming third round. If all parties to those talks displayed good faith and the resolve to reach consensus, the just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that was the Security Council's goal could be achieved. It was the responsibility of the

international community to help the process along, encouraging the parties to negotiate in a peaceful environment guaranteed by the United Nations, and to adopt a bold and creative approach. He praised the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for their contribution to the establishment of a new framework for dialogue and hoped that the General Assembly resolution to be adopted at the current session would send a strong signal of consensus and support to the parties and the subregion as a whole.

30. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) praised the Special Committee on decolonization for its dedication to impartially discussing the Non-Self-Governing Territories that still did not enjoy their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. His delegation welcomed the Committee's recommendations and urged the administering Powers to cooperate with it increasingly, for only through implementation of the Committee's decisions and resolutions could General Assembly resolution 1514 (XXV) become a reality. The appeals of petitioners who appeared before the Committee should not only be heard, but also respected, and no Non-Self-Governing Territory should be removed from the Committee's list.

31. While welcoming the Committee's many successes, he noted that the situation of Puerto Rico remained unchanged, despite the support for the right of the latter to self-determination and independence. Fortunately, the Committee had now called for a full review of the question of Puerto Rico in the General Assembly. Puerto Rico should not continue to be the exception to the self-determination and independence of the people of the Caribbean.

32. He expressed Nicaragua's solidarity with the people of Western Sahara and welcomed the latest series of negotiations and praised Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO for their efforts, which he hoped would result in a just and lasting peace. He also expressed solidarity with the people of Latin America on the dispute over the sovereignty of the Malvinas. Nicaraguans could not happily enjoy their own hard-won freedom until all Non-Self-Governing Territories became masters of their own destinies and natural resources. Only then would the savage and inhuman era of colonialism be eradicated once and for all.

33. **Mr. Alzayani** (Bahrain) noted that, although the United Nations had been extremely successful, on the

whole, in bringing about decolonization there were still a number of Non-Self-Governing Territories awaiting decolonization. Subjection of peoples to foreign domination was not only a denial of fundamental human rights but also an impediment to security; moreover, it hindered economic cooperation and social development.

34. While expressing the hope that the objectives of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would be achieved quickly, he pointed out that one third of the Decade had already elapsed. It was to be hoped that the Second International Decade would see the achievement of the final goal, a world free of colonization.

35. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to take action on draft resolutions before it.

Draft resolution I on information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (A/62/23, chap. XII)

36. **The Chairman** said that the Secretariat had informed him that draft resolution I had no financial implications.

37. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Finland, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Libéria, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar,

Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe.

Against:

None.

Abstaining:

France, Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

38. *Draft resolution I was adopted by 134 to none, with 4 abstentions.*

39. **Ms. Mace** (United Kingdom) said that, as in previous years, her country had abstained in the vote. It did not take issue with the main objective of the resolution, which was to seek compliance with Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations, and would continue to meet its obligations fully in that regard with respect to the United Kingdom Overseas Territories. However, her delegation believed that the decision as to whether a Non-Self-Governing Territory had reached a level of self-government sufficient to relieve the administering Power of the obligation to transmit information under 73 e of the Charter fell to the government of the Territory and the administering Power concerned, and not to the General Assembly.

Draft resolution II on economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/62/23, chap. XII)

40. **The Chairman** said the Secretariat had informed him that resolution II had no financial implications.

41. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi,

Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Finland, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, United States of America.

Abstaining:

France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

42. *Draft resolution II was adopted by 142 votes to 2, with 2 abstentions.*

43. **Mr. Desmoures** (Argentina) said that the resolution must be interpreted and implemented in conformity with the relevant General Assembly resolutions on decolonization, particularly resolution 2065 (XX). Its applicability depended on a given Territory's right to self-determination. General Assembly resolutions had established that in specific cases, such as those of the Malvinas, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, illegally occupied by

the United Kingdom, the means of ending that special colonial situation was not self-determination, but a negotiated settlement of the dispute over sovereignty. The resolution just adopted was therefore totally irrelevant to the current situation of those islands and the surrounding maritime areas, all of which formed part of Argentine territory, namely the United Kingdom's unilateral exploitation of Argentina's natural resources, in breach of specific provisions, especially General Assembly resolution 31/49 (1976).

Draft resolution III on implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/62/23, chap. XII)

44. **The Chairman** said that the Secretariat had informed him that draft resolution III had no financial implications.

45. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

None.

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Micronesia (Federated States of), Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

46. *Draft resolution III was adopted by 93 votes to none, with 55 abstentions.*

47. **Ms. Malcata** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the States members of the European Union reaffirmed their support for the specialized agencies in their efforts to offer assistance to Non-Self-Governing Territories in the humanitarian, technical and educational fields. However, the statutes of those agencies must be carefully respected, and for that reason the European Union had again abstained in the vote on the draft resolution.

48. **Mr. Desmoures** (Argentina), said that the resolution just adopted needed to be implemented in conformity with the relevant provisions of the United Nations and the decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Special Committee on decolonization. For that reason his delegation had abstained in the vote.

49. **Ms. Eleva** (Russian Federation) said that her country's fundamental approach to decolonization had not changed. While it had consistently advocated effective implementation of the right to self-determination and independence of Non-Self-Governing Territories, it had abstained in the vote on the grounds that consideration of such a political issue in the format provided by the resolution was not feasible and was redundant in terms of the work of the Special Committee and the Fourth Committee.

Draft resolution A/C.4/62/L.2 on offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories

50. **The Chairman** said that the Secretariat had informed him that draft resolution A/C.4/62/L.2 had no financial implications. India and the United Republic of Tanzania had become sponsors of the draft resolution.

51. *Draft resolution A/C.4/62/L.2 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/62/L.3 on the question of Western Sahara

52. **The Chairman** drew attention to some typographical errors in the draft resolution.

53. *Draft resolution A/C.4/62/L.3, as orally amended, was adopted.*

54. **Ms. Malcata** (Portugal), speaking in explanation of vote on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Montenegro and Serbia and, in addition, Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine, said that the European Union was pleased that the resolution on the question of Western Sahara had been presented at the current session as a proposal of the Chairman and adopted by consensus. The European Union strongly supported Security Council resolution 1754 (2007), which called on the parties to enter into negotiations without preconditions in good faith, taking into account the developments of the last months. It commended the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy in support of that resolution, and encouraged the parties to continue to progress in the negotiations.

Draft resolution IV on the question of New Caledonia (A/62/23, chap. XII)

55. *Draft resolution IV was adopted.*

Draft resolution VI on the questions of American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, Saint Helena, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands (A/62/23, chap. XII)

56. *Draft resolution VI was adopted.*

57. **Mr. Desmoures** (Argentina), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his Government joined the consensus for the resolution just adopted, with reference only to the countries listed therein. Argentina reiterated its support for the process of self-determination and the goal of putting an end to colonialism in all its forms, considering the principle of self-determination to be a fundamental right recognized in the relevant human rights treaties, and applicable in all cases where a country had been colonized by a colonial power and remained subject to it. Argentina hoped that the process of self-determination would also move forward in situations where there was a dispute over sovereignty, which the General Assembly had defined as special situations of colonialism, specifically recommending negotiation as the only way to put an end to the colonial situation.

58. **Ms. Mace** (United Kingdom) said that her delegation had reluctantly joined the consensus on the draft resolution, reflecting its full support for the right to self-determination. However, some of the language used in the resolution was unacceptable, in that it failed to reflect the modernized relationship between the United Kingdom and its Overseas Territories.

Draft resolution VII on the dissemination of information on decolonization (A/62/23, chap. XII)

59. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Finland, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein,

Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining:

France.

60. *Draft resolution VII was adopted by 145 votes to 3, with 1 abstention.*

61. **Mr. Desmoures** (Argentina), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his Government supported the right to self-determination of peoples under colonial and foreign occupation, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 2625 (XXV), but wished to point out that the resolution just adopted should be interpreted and applied in line with the relevant General Assembly resolutions dealing with the special situation of the Malvinas, especially resolution 2065 (XX), as well as declarations by the Committee recognizing the existence of a sovereignty dispute between, as the sole parties, the United Kingdom and Argentina, and stipulating that the way to resolve it was by reconvening the process of bilateral negotiations, in order to achieve a peaceful and just solution to the dispute, taking into account the interests of the population of the islands.

62. **Sir John Sawers** (United Kingdom) said that his delegation had voted against the draft resolution because it considered that the obligation imposed on the United Nations to publicize information on

decolonization constituted an unwarranted drain on the Organization's scarce resources.

63. **Mr. Sallam** (Saudi Arabia) said that as he had not been present when the votes were taken he wished to express his support for all of the resolutions adopted thus far.

Draft resolution VIII on the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/62/23, chap. XII)

64. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Finland, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela

(Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Belgium, France.

65. *Draft resolution VIII was adopted by 145 to 3, with 2 abstentions.*

66. **Mr. Desmoures** (Argentina) said that while he had voted in favour of the draft resolution he wished to recall that according to General Assembly resolution 850 (IX), visiting missions could be sent only to those Non-Self-Governing Territories that were not the subject of a sovereignty dispute.

67. **Sir John Sawers** (United Kingdom) said that, despite the fact that it had voted against the draft resolution, some elements of which were unacceptable, the United Kingdom was committed to modernizing its relationship with its Overseas Territories, while fully taking into account the views of the peoples of those Territories.

Right of reply

68. **Sir John Sawers** (United Kingdom), referring to the statement made by the representative of Spain about Gibraltar, said that the United Kingdom welcomed the continued progress of the trilateral process of dialogue among the Governments of the United Kingdom, Spain and Gibraltar. The agreements already reached were being implemented and were having a tangible impact on the quality of life of thousands of people in both Gibraltar and in Spain. Those agreements were without prejudice to the respective positions of the United Kingdom and Spain on sovereignty, on which the United Nations had not taken a view.

69. His Government welcomed the decision by the people of Gibraltar to accept the new constitution, which provided for a modern relationship between Gibraltar and the United Kingdom. It was regrettable that the outdated approach of the Special Committee on decolonization seemed not to have allowed for that to be recognized. The criteria used by the Committee to determine on whether a Non-Self-Governing Territory should be "de-listed" failed to take into account the way that relationships between the United Kingdom

and Gibraltar, and other Overseas Territories, had been modernized in a manner acceptable to both sides. Gibraltar was now politically mature, and its relationship with the United Kingdom was non-colonial in nature.

70. As a separate territory recognized by the United Nations, Gibraltar enjoyed the individual and collective rights accorded by the United Nations Charter. The new constitution therefore confirmed the right to self-determination of the Gibraltarian people. That right was not constrained by the Treaty of Utrecht except only in so far as it gave Spain the right of refusal should Britain ever renounce sovereignty. Thus independence would only be an option with Spanish consent. The Government of the United Kingdom recognized that the act of deciding in the referendum to accept the new constitution was an exercise of the right of self-determination by the Gibraltarian people. The referendum, organized by the Government of Gibraltar, constituted a democratic, lawful and entirely proper act.

71. The Constitution did not in any way diminish British sovereignty, and the United Kingdom retained its full international responsibility for Gibraltar including its external relations and defence, in full accord with the freely expressed wishes of the people of Gibraltar. The Government of the United Kingdom did not accept that the principle of territorial integrity had ever been applicable to the decolonization of Gibraltar, nor that the existence of a sovereignty dispute implied that the people of Gibraltar did not have the right to self-determination.

72. The United Kingdom reaffirmed its longstanding commitment to the people of Gibraltar that it would never enter into arrangements under which they would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their wishes, and any reference to the Brussels Process needed to be understood in that context. The Government of the United Kingdom continued to enjoy very cordial relations with Spain and would continue to work amicably with it on all Gibraltar-related issues.

73. Referring also to the remarks made by the representatives of Argentina, Nicaragua and Venezuela, he said that the United Kingdom had no doubts as to its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. There could be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands unless and until the islanders so wished.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.



General Assembly

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Summary record of the 7th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 18 October 2007, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Mohamad (Sudan)

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07-55100 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 35: Questions relating to information
(A/62/21 and A/62/205)

1. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in his capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced the report of that Committee (A/62/21), which provided information on the Committee's activities and recommendations in the form of draft resolutions. With the appointment of Thailand and the Dominican Republic, the Committee on Information had a total of 110 members. Zambia's request for full membership of the Committee would be considered at its next session.

2. During the general debate at the 2007 session, members had emphasized the central role of the Department of Public Information (DPI) in disseminating information on the Organization's goals and had acknowledged the vital role of the Committee on Information and its cooperation with DPI. The international community had been called upon to step up its efforts to close the growing digital divide between the developed and developing countries. Speakers had noted that the presence of United Nations information centres in the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, enhanced the flow of information in those countries and assisted them in addressing disparities. They had requested the Department to ensure parity among the official languages. With regard to cooperation between DPI and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department had been encouraged to devise and implement a comprehensive communications strategy that highlighted success stories of peacekeeping and the role of peacekeepers. Although the Department had been praised for its development of the United Nations website, the importance of traditional means of communications, especially radio, had been emphasized.

3. In a statement made before the conclusion of the session, the Group of 77 and China had noted that the Group had agreed to a proposal by the European Union to streamline the resolution of the Committee on Information. In 2008, the Group would circulate a draft resolution that reflected that desire. The Group had also stated that discussions on the name of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library would be deferred until the next session. The Group, the European Union and other

members had agreed to set up an ad hoc committee to review those issues.

4. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), introducing the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/205), said that, following consultations with Member States during his first six months as Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, he had implemented a number of new initiatives. In line with the Secretary-General's vision that the Department should communicate the Organization's work to the global public based on positive results, DPI had developed a strategic approach that included six components: integrated use of traditional means of communications and new information and communications technologies (ICTs); targeted delivery of public information products; greater integration of the information centres in the implementation of communications strategies; greater partnership with civil society; system-wide coordination; and internal evaluation of major activities. Two events that had highlighted that approach in 2007 had been the Secretary-General's High-Level Event on Climate Change and the Stand Up and Speak Out against Poverty and for the Millennium Development Goals event in October 2007. The integrated approach had benefited work in priority areas such as peace and security, human rights and the Department's annual international media seminar on peace in the Middle East.

5. The information centres were essential to the Department's work, serving as a bridge between global audiences and partners in the field. More opportunities had been created to bring the centres' staff together at regional levels, and communications between the field and Headquarters had been improved. In order to improve productivity, increase global outreach and respond to the demand for information, the Department had made full use of ICTs. It had provided webcasts of meetings, posted photos and videos on the Internet and had used videoconferences to link partners worldwide. The Department had also taken steps to use new technology to reach audiences in other ways. The News Centre on the United Nations home page had been reconfigured to make it a multimedia news portal for news products and the press releases page had been rebuilt to make it more user-friendly. All United Nations texts, video and audio-based news would be made available on mobile devices.

6. The Department's audio library would be placed online, allowing broadcasters to access audio of all major intergovernmental meetings, speeches and press conferences. In order to save valuable resources, media accreditation was processed electronically. The proposal to change the name of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library to the "Dag Hammarskjöld Library and Knowledge Centre" or "DHLINK" reflected the increasing emphasis on the use of ICTs in the library services.

7. In addition to the emphasis on new ICTs, traditional means of communications remained vital. Working closely with partners, United Nations Radio was extending its once-a-day news programme to continuous feeds throughout the day. Those feeds were available in Arabic, English and Spanish, and other languages would follow. Without putting a strain on departmental resources, several important partnerships had been established to enhance sensitization programmes. The Annual DPI/NGO Conference offered the opportunity to establish partnerships with new non-governmental organizations. The United Nations Orchestra had been set up to promote the Organization's goals and the Yearbook had been placed online. Several United States organizations had requested the presence of United Nations speakers at events commemorating United Nations Day.

8. It was important to promote those kinds of initiatives, given that the Secretariat Building would be closed for renovations under the Capital Master Plan. The Department had also worked with universities and schools to promote the Organization's work. The "Holocaust and the United Nations" outreach programme, which had been entirely funded by partners, was a good example of an effective partnership aimed at disseminating the General Assembly's message. The most important resource available to DPI was its staff and efforts were being made to make effective use of human resources in order to achieve the Secretary-General's vision of "a stronger United Nations for a better world".

9. **The Chairman** said that millions of individuals had benefited from the Department's work. The Department had successfully transmitted the Organization's messages and objectives. It was especially important for the Department to disseminate information on the Millennium Development Goals and the dialogue among civilizations, which were of vital

importance to the consolidation of global peace and security.

10. *A video on the work of the Department was shown.*

11. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would hold an interactive dialogue on the item, and invited members to put questions to the Under-Secretary-General.

12. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that it would be interesting to learn more about the Department's work during the reporting period in promoting the dialogue among civilizations and in modernizing its information centres in the developing countries.

13. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for Palestine) expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Department's Palestine, Decolonization and Human Rights Section to increase awareness of the situation in Palestine in all its facets and for its training programme for Palestinian journalists. The annual international media seminar organized by the Department, which gathered together media and civil-society representatives, both Palestinian and Israeli, likewise played an important role in promoting dialogue on the situation in Palestine.

14. **Ms. Yan Jiarong** (China) noted that in a relatively short period of time the issue of climate change had become a priority for the international community. She requested more information on any particularly successful strategies the Department had used to increase awareness of that issue and asked whether they could also be applied in other areas. She also requested more information on the Department's efforts to provide training to journalists and the media in the developing countries and on the television magazine "21st Century" mentioned in the video, including which countries were broadcasting it, and in particular whether it was broadcast in China.

15. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), in response to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, said that his Department had numerous activities aimed at promoting dialogue among civilizations, including seminars on such topics as the Holocaust, averting genocide, and combating hatred, as well as art exhibits and cultural programmes and articles in the *UN Chronicle*. The Department was also available to help

organize and coordinate events aimed at promoting dialogue among civilizations. With regard to the modernization of resources in the United Nations information centres, he said that he had instructed the Department to undertake a survey of their needs. In addition to upgrading material resources, it was equally important to increase training opportunities. For example, a week-long library workshop had been held in Bangkok for reference assistants from information centres in Asia and the Pacific, including Iran.

16. With regard to the statement by the Observer for Palestine, he said that the Department was currently working on preparations for the 2008 annual international media seminar for Palestine. He hoped those seminars and the Department's other efforts would contribute to dialogue between the Palestinian and Israeli participants.

17. Turning to the questions posed by the representative of China, he said that the Department's efforts in the area of climate change provided an example of optimal use of the Organization's resources. An important step in coordinating the efforts of the Organization was the web portal on climate change, which provided an overview of the efforts of 15 agencies. It was also important to have a communications strategy aimed at transmitting clear messages about what was expected of the Organization as well as of Member States with regard to both actions and policy development. The Department tried to highlight the need to adapt to climate change and to present concrete information on the consequences of climate change based on the findings and projections of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in order to help people understand the issue. In that context, he noted that the IPCC web page, unlike the United Nations portal, was confusing and it was difficult to identify the major messages that needed to be communicated.

18. He underscored the importance of television and webcasts and said that he intended to increase the use of those tools. The Department also had an annual fellowship programme to provide training to media professionals from the developing countries and the countries in transition. As for the programme "21st Century," he said that it was available in China and would also be available on BBC World starting in January 2008. The programme was a monthly 30-minute documentary-style broadcast on human-interest stories.

19. **Ms. Williams** (Jamaica) welcomed the exhibition organized at Headquarters in March 2007 commemorating the two hundredth anniversary of the banning of the slave trade and wondered whether the information centres had any activities planned to commemorate that important anniversary.

20. **Mr. Gebreel** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) welcomed the Department's efforts to call attention to the issue of Palestine but wondered whether sufficient attention was paid to increasing awareness of that issue among the many visitors to the Secretariat.

21. **Mr. El-Sherbini** (Egypt) said that the Department should increase its efforts to raise awareness of the situation in the Middle East but must do so in an objective and neutral manner based on the situation on the ground. In that context he requested information on activities to train Palestinian journalists. He also expressed concern that, in spite of the official policy of equality for the official languages of the Organization, reports of the Secretary-General were posted on the Internet first in English and only subsequently, sometimes days later, in other official languages.

22. **Mr. Farhane** (Morocco) welcomed the Department's close cooperation with Member States and wondered whether the information centres could play a role in school-related outreach. Underscoring the need for an integrated approach to human rights, he wondered what educational or training activities were planned to increase awareness of that issue.

23. **Mr. Ali** (Sudan) underscored the importance of the Department's efforts to train journalists and asked whether the number of journalists being trained, currently 15 per year, would be increased.

24. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), in response to the representative of Jamaica with regard to commemorating the end of the slave trade, said that an exhibition and a briefing note had been prepared, NGOs had received a briefing, there had been an article in the *UN Chronicle*, musical programmes had been organized in cooperation with the Staff Recreation Council, and a concert organized by the Caribbean States would be held in mid-December.

25. Turning to the questions from the representatives of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Egypt, he said that the Headquarters exhibition on Palestine had been

updated and the background booklet was in the process of being updated. In addition, 10 Palestinian journalists would be starting the annual training programme in November 2007, and other programmes and the annual international media seminar would continue. He hoped that the Department's publications and communications activities would address the concerns of Member States about political and economic issues related to the question of Palestine.

26. In response to the representative of Morocco, he said that in 2008 the Department would focus on increasing awareness of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights through various events and programmes. He hoped that an interactive website would be developed on the issues of human rights and disabilities as well as a video and classroom resources. With regard to the question from the representative of the Sudan, he said that the Department would be happy to increase the number of journalists it trained if sufficient resources were available. It was exploring ways of increasing its resources for that purpose, for example through increased voluntary contributions.

27. **The Chairman**, speaking in his personal capacity, asked what criteria were used when selecting journalists to participate in symposiums and training courses, because there had been allegations that the least developed countries were underrepresented. He requested information on the Department's interaction with the regional commissions, in particular the Economic Commission for Africa and on what role the Department played in the Organization's strategy to achieve system-wide coherence.

28. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) said, with regard to promoting coherence in United Nations information activities, that it was difficult for the Organization to speak with one voice, as its constituent bodies needed to impart different information for their own specific purposes, but that his Department was making every effort to promote the consistency of messages about the United Nations and to coordinate all its communications and information work. In that context, he drew attention to the "delivering as one" initiative on coherence in United Nations activities in the field of development, environment and humanitarian assistance and to efforts by the Department to promote that coherence at the information level. To that end, the Department held

weekly coordination meetings at Headquarters, bringing together some 40 members of the extended United Nations family, with a view to ensuring a coherent information strategy among them.

29. He pointed out that coherence in communication must be integrated with coherence in policy matters, since substantive issues could not be effectively tackled without effective communications strategies to inform the public about how the Organization worked. He acknowledged that much remained to be done in that area, but that the Secretary-General had recognized the need for such integration and the Department was currently working to ensure that its communication activities were fully in step with the policies of the Organization.

30. With regard to the selection of journalists, he outlined the criteria employed, including regional representation, professional standing and fluency in English, and described the procedures followed by his Department in that process. The aim was to ensure a fully transparent process, and efforts were being made to improve it further.

31. On the issue of contacts with partners, particularly in Africa, he reviewed the close cooperation between the Department's Africa Section and the Economic Commission for Africa, including in launching its reports. The Department would also be closely involved in publicizing a number of major events to be held in 2008 at which Africa would be a priority.

32. **Mr. Sandhu** (India) drew attention to the problem caused by media outlets according prominence to unsubstantiated reports relating to the United Nations and stressed the need for prominence to be given, instead, to success stories about its peacekeeping operations. Such stories should also be publicized in the specific areas where such operations were held, as well as through the usual international channels. In particular, he highlighted the important role played by the Department in ensuring that the Organization's peacekeeping activities were correctly reported in the media.

33. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) agreed that it was vital to correct such sensationalist and erroneous reports. To that end, his Department provided guidance and performed an advisory role, within its limited

resources, maintaining close working relations with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

34. **The Chairman** invited the Committee, following that interactive dialogue, to continue with its general debate on the item.

35. **Mr. Shafqat** (Pakistan) said that, as the public voice of the United Nations, the Department of Public Information had assumed a far greater dimension in the modern world, which was characterized by the growing polarization of societies and cultures, and had performed commendably in promoting such matters as the reform process within the Organization, climate change, development in Africa, the prevention of genocide and the Millennium Development Goals. The recent resurgence of interest by the Member States in the work of the United Nations could only be further stimulated by the effective performance of the Department, keeping the public at large informed.

36. Regretting the tendency of the media to sensationalize bad news, he stressed the need to spotlight the Organization's ideals and accomplishments and to transmit the United Nations message to all Member States. As those accomplishments tended to be seen as "soft news", with little impact on the public, it was important for the Department to be revitalized and to make fuller use of the capabilities of its personnel. To that end, it should develop a comprehensive strategy aimed at projecting the United Nations as a successful organization that had promoted the development of peoples and helped improve the quality of their lives. That strategy should create an environment conducive to promoting the message of the United Nations and to fostering popular support for its goals and objectives.

37. Reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to the freedom of speech and the role of the media, he reviewed the vibrant state of the media in his country but noted that, while freedom of expression was encouraged, its use as an excuse to malign other faiths was rejected. He stressed that information and communication should serve to bring regions and religions closer together, rather than to divide them.

38. Pakistan attached priority to the work of the United Nations information centres around the world, which helped enhance the interest and involvement of populations in United Nations efforts to promote peace, harmony and development. They also boosted the public image of the United Nations, and his delegation,

accordingly, urged the Department to ensure that their technical and human resource requirements were fully met.

39. Noting the imbalances in the flow of information between the developed and the developing world, he called for efforts to strengthen the information and communication infrastructures of the developing countries, which were currently overwhelmed by the vastly better resourced media outlets of the developed world.

40. He also underlined the Department's important role in disseminating information about United Nations peacekeeping operations and in strengthening dialogue among different cultures, with a view to enhancing their mutual understanding and promoting peace.

41. He urged the Department to ensure the equitable representation of journalists from developing countries, not only in securing interviews with the Secretary-General, but, in general, in accreditation to the United Nations. He suggested that priority should be given, in that process, to journalists from developing countries, given how few of them were able to travel to the United Nations to cover its activities.

42. Finally, voicing Pakistan's support for the Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Scholarship Fund of the United Nations Correspondents Association, he suggested that, in addition to supporting the Association, the Department could also itself finance visits by more journalists from developing countries to the United Nations, thus better equipping them to serve as ambassadors for the Organization in their own societies.

43. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his country attached importance to the development of a new worldwide information system which was equitable and reflected the principles of the United Nations and international law. The Department had a particular responsibility in pursuit of that lofty goal and it was to be commended on its attainments in publicizing its four key thematic priorities: peace and security, climate change, the Millennium Development Goals and human rights. In United Nations information activities, however, strengthened attention should also be given to other areas, including the Palestinian problem, the occupied Syrian Golan and intercultural dialogue.

44. Turning to the Secretary-General's report (A/62/205), he said that his country welcomed efforts to improve the Department's website, but called for further effort to be made to ensure language parity, particularly regarding the Arabic version of the site. The Syrian Arab Republic also urged the Department to step up its efforts to narrow the digital divide between the North and the South, including through the provision of necessary resources, and, in particular, encouraged the Department to assist with the training of Palestinians working in the media.

45. Partnership between the Department and the non-governmental and private sector was also of great importance and, to that end, the information centres played an important role. Any attempts to streamline them should be based on consultation with the host States and the beneficiary countries.

46. **Mr. Berrah** (Algeria) observed that there was general consensus about the priority and sensitivity of the four key issues on which the Department had been focusing. Those thematic priorities were evidence of the Department's effective communication and information strategy. The strategy, in turn, had to rely on a global network of information centres, services and channels capable of creating a flexible and interactive communication system. Evolving technologies, in the meantime, provided new tools with a much broader reach that reduced the cost and the time needed for communication.

47. The Department must continually upgrade its technological infrastructure in order to expand the audience with access to its website, without forgetting that disparities in levels of development throughout the world required continuing emphasis on traditional means of communication such as radio and television. An effective information strategy had to take into account the specific needs and diversity of the target audiences and adapt the dissemination of news accordingly. When an ordinary citizen in his own country, for instance, learned that the United Nations was coordinating international action in key fields like environmental protection, peace and security and respect for human rights, that individual would be given a strong sense of belonging to a human community beyond national borders.

48. The Department's communication strategy had to be integrated and brought into line with the information initiatives of the various other United

Nations bodies in order to create a common strategy conveying complementary messages and serving consistent goals. Multilingualism and language parity were also basic to maximum outreach. Issues dealt with on the website should be regularly updated, and the messages conveyed by the Organization or under its auspices required transparency, impartiality and balance, not to speak of the need for faithful and objective press releases and summary records of meetings.

49. His delegation believed that the information centres should be reorganized differently around regional hubs, depending on the countries concerned and the availability and extent of development of the means of communication.

50. **Ms. Yan Jiarong** (China) said that, at a time of growing support worldwide for the United Nations as the most representative and authoritative intergovernmental organization, particular importance attached to its public information activities. To that end, the Department had identified its communications priorities and objectives and its activities were yielding fruitful results. It was China's hope that the Department would give its four key thematic priorities the targeted and effective publicity that they merited.

51. China believed that the task of publicizing the United Nations should not rest exclusively with the Department of Public Information, but that other United Nations bodies should also enhance their information activities and work to enhance the positive image of the United Nations. In that process, the Department should take responsibility for planning and coordination and for the formulation of inter-agency publicity strategies, making full use of such mechanisms as the United Nations Communications Group and issue-based task forces.

52. Recalling that General Assembly resolution 34/182 had called for "the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better-balanced dissemination of information", she noted the particular relevance of that appeal at the current time, with the growing gap between the rich and poor and the ever-widening "digital divide".

53. In China's view, for a more just and more effective world information and communication order,

greater efforts were needed in five major areas. First, the United Nations should ensure the provision of accurate information and rebut distorted and falsified reports.

54. Second, efforts should be made to counter the tendency to focus public opinion on peace issues to the neglect of development. Many issues of particular concern, such as terrorism, climate change and the Darfur crisis, were all ultimately development issues as well, and the United Nations information system should endeavour to ensure that the public at large properly appreciated the role and importance of development.

55. Third, the United Nations information system should play a stronger role in promoting understanding and dialogue among societies and religions, by encouraging media outlets to lead the way in opposing prejudice based on religion, ethnicity and other factors and promoting the concepts of tolerance, respect, justice and harmony.

56. Fourth, traditional means of communication should be strengthened to cater to the needs of developing countries. Given that many regions in the world still relied on broadcast and printed information, it was important that, in its information activities, the United Nations should narrow, and not widen, the existing disparities between different regions and countries in information flows. In that respect, China commended United Nations Radio on its efforts.

57. Fifth, partnerships with the media outlets of developing countries should be promoted and technological assistance and capacity-building made available to them. Accordingly, China encouraged the Department to strengthen its efforts to provide training and internship programmes for journalists from developing countries and hoped that priority could be given to developing countries in the arrangement of media pools or interviews.

58. Sixth, contacts should be strengthened with non-governmental organizations and eminent public figures from developing countries. In particular, China urged the United Nations to appoint more Messengers of Peace and Goodwill Ambassadors from developing countries, thereby ensuring that United Nations messages reached every corner of the world.

59. **Mr. Godinho** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia,

the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, said that the Department of Public Information was crucial in providing a focused information service of high quality to the United Nations, to media outlets all over the world and to interested citizens. It had developed a commendable strategic approach to promoting global awareness and greater understanding of the work of the United Nations, thereby generating support. Information was particularly important with regard to peacekeeping operations, conflict prevention and other crisis-management and peacebuilding activities.

60. The Department should set well-defined goals, identify target audiences, delegate dissemination as appropriate, and assess the impact of its activities, which were of particular interest to the European Union. Since the Internet was a growing source of news for audiences around the world, it was well that the United Nations website had been made more user-friendly, providing a range of news in a variety of presentations in several languages; and that its multilingual programming was now better managed. The goal should be language parity within existing resources. More information about the United Nations should be made available on the Internet, especially in ways that attracted the interest of young people. At the same time, the United Nations message also had to reach those in developing countries without access to the new technologies, requiring continued reliance on traditional means of communications like the radio and the press.

61. The fundamental players in spreading the message to every corner of the world were the United Nations information centres. The Department should continue to rationalize their work in order to enhance outreach, and to foster fruitful cooperation among them and with the regional centres.

62. The new strategic approach adopted by the United Nations libraries was designed to expand their ability to offer information on a wide range of topics not only within the United Nations but also worldwide.

63. The growing number of journalists being killed or taken hostage was extremely alarming — 47 had been killed thus far in 2007, including the recent odious killing of a Japanese journalist in Myanmar and of a *Washington Post* journalist in Baghdad. The Security

Council itself considered such violence against journalists as a possible threat to international peace and security.

64. The European Union, reiterating its commitment to freedom of expression and freedom of the press, repudiated all attempts, in any society, to control or influence the media in order to suppress information and opinion.

65. **Mr. Ali** (Sudan) said that individuals and institutions worldwide and in developing countries in particular, including the Sudan, looked to the Department of Public Information, which was the voice of the United Nations, to disseminate information covered in a balanced, impartial and transparent manner in a free and independent environment.

66. Referring to the four themes identified as main areas for future activities of the Department, he proposed that attention should also be devoted to fostering the dialogue among civilizations and the culture of peace and tolerance; much of the misunderstanding and violence in today's world resulted from prejudice, miscommunication or lack of communication, and the Department could play a significant part in promoting friendship, understanding and respect for all cultures, religions and civilizations. To that end, he encouraged ongoing consultation with Member States, particularly where information and communication plans for the Organization were concerned.

67. Despite enormous efforts by the Department, the digital divide between rich and poor remained a persistent obstacle to transmission of the United Nations message to those without access to advanced communication technologies, notably in impoverished African and other countries. Continued reliance on traditional means of communication, particularly radio and print, was therefore vital to reaching populations in remote areas, with the added advantages of wider audiences and cost savings. Use of local languages and the establishment of regional and national partnerships were also vital to the effective and accurate communication of messages. He hoped, however, that more resources would be allocated to the Department's training programme for journalists; at the present time, only 15 training grants were available annually, which was too low a number. He also hoped that the Department would pursue its commendable efforts to achieve parity among the official languages on its website and in other services, with special focus on

addressing the unequal use of English compared with the five other official languages, particularly Arabic.

68. He applauded the Department's work in promoting peacekeeping operations, in which context he referred to his country's signature of a peace agreement that had ended 20 years of war and led to the establishment of a Government of National Unity. The Sudan was also preparing to participate with the other parties to the Darfur Peace Agreement in a decisive conference to be held in Tripoli during the current month. With that in mind, he said that the Department should be involved in strengthening the culture of peace and understanding by avoiding any replication of biased reports aired in the media for political aims that were inconsistent with the United Nations message and by coordinating closely with Governments.

69. Developing countries, particularly in Africa, continued to merit special attention from the Department, not least in matters where progress had been achieved, including the Millennium Development Goals, malaria and HIV/AIDS, poverty alleviation and socio-economic development. He also urged stronger cooperation with such United Nations bodies as the Special Committee of 24 on Decolonization, as well as further work on the special information programme on the question of Palestine with a view to mobilizing additional support and raising awareness of the cause of the Palestinian people in their just fight for exercise of their inalienable rights and the establishment of an independent State.

70. **Mr. Zhanibekov** (Kazakhstan) said that his delegation supported the Department's continuing efforts to improve the United Nations information infrastructure and project a positive image of the Organization. The culture of communication should permeate all levels of the United Nations, as a way of creating broad global support. Information about United Nations activities should be publicized in every part of the world, including the Commonwealth of Independent States, expanding geographical outreach and target audiences. While the Department's streamlined operation had improved the spread of information, more should be done to inform Member States that were not members of the Security Council about the issues being dealt with by that body. The Department was working admirably to highlight the key thematic priorities of the Organization.

71. Kazakhstan supported the consolidation of United Nations information centres around regional hubs as a

way of improving the United Nations worldwide advocacy. There was a welcome collaboration between the 63 information centres around the world and the local United Nations country teams.

72. The Department should publicize the positive experiences of Member States in areas of global concern. World attention should be drawn, for example, to the fact that his own country, having been used as a nuclear testing-ground under the Soviet regime, had immediately after independence dismantled its sizeable nuclear infrastructure and arsenal, marking the first time in history that a nation possessing such destructive force had given it up voluntarily, and determining Kazakhstan's global security strategy thereafter. The global repercussions of the environmental disaster in the Aral Sea region, which could be remedied only with external technical and financial assistance, should also be given more prominence; and Kazakhstan's valuable experience in maintaining harmonious relations among so many ethnic and religious groups might be of interest to the world public, as also its international initiatives to further dialogue among world religious leaders and on security issues in Asia.

73. The timeliness of establishing a single global information and communication space within the United Nations was unarguable; and Kazakhstan, was creating a national information framework — "e-government" — to work in conjunction with the global information community.

74. **Mr. Punkrasin** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), observed that in the age of globalization, information was a potent tool that must not remain in the hands of the privileged few, but should be distributed objectively in a balanced and unbiased fashion. It was increasingly hard for the people of the world to distinguish between truthful information and distorted perceptions, either because they were inundated, in technologically advanced parts of the world, with too much information or because, in areas of the world without the needed basic infrastructure, they were not connected to the pool of information available to others.

75. In such an environment, the United Nations faced the two major challenges of increasing the general public's understanding of its work, and ensuring the most efficient flow of information within the Organization. The Department of Public Information was meeting the first challenge by focusing on the

crucial issues being addressed by the United Nations, such as peace, development, human rights, the Millennium Development Goals, and non-traditional threats to human security like terrorism, climate change or communicable diseases. The Department could, however, focus more on one other important issue — the promotion of dialogue among civilizations — and could help connect peoples of different backgrounds by highlighting the common problems and challenges they all faced.

76. Better coordination could improve the flow of information among the various United Nations agencies, and between them and the outside world. The Department had several promising new strategies built on a closer relationship with its network of information centres, its connections with other United Nations departments and with more than 1,500 civil society organizations. ASEAN and the United Nations had, for instance, signed a memorandum of understanding regarding exchanges of information and expertise between them. ASEAN also encouraged the Department to strengthen its partnership with international media organizations around the world in order to broaden its public outreach. ASEAN members had themselves undertaken to develop closer links with local and regional media in order to improve their people's understanding of international events and objectives. They attached importance to developing their young people and were pleased to note that the Department had also taken creative steps to reach educators and young people with objective and balanced information. Since the handling of information was so important, the Department should also be commended for its efforts to improve the United Nations information capacity.

77. Speaking for itself, Thailand, now a member of the Committee on Information, pledged its full support for the Organization's work in that area.

78. **Mr. Htin Lynn** (Myanmar) speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the delegation of Portugal, said that it was wrong to exploit the unfortunate killing of a Japanese journalist in Myanmar, an incident that had never occurred before, in order to further a hidden political agenda. His Government disseminated information effectively and impartially, and the incident in question was totally unrelated to the matter under discussion in the Committee.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.



General Assembly

Sixty-second session

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 8th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 19 October 2007, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Vidouris (Vice-Chairman) (Greece)

Contents

Agenda item 35: Questions relating to information (*continued*)

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07-55307 (E)



In the absence of Mr. Mohamad (Sudan), Mr. Vidoiris (Greece), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

Agenda item 35: Questions relating to information
(continued) (A/62/21 and 205)

1. **Ms. Loo** (Singapore) said that one of the challenges before the Department of Public Information (DPI) was to tap into and manage the new media and the innumerable alternative channels of information that had been created by recent digital technology, revolutionizing communication and making it possible to reach the world public, especially the young, in an unprecedented way. Without abandoning traditional means of communication, the Department had, in fact, begun to ensure greater outreach by routinely expanding and modernizing its website.

2. High-tech communication could, however, be double-edged. Speed did not necessarily guarantee accuracy, and with so much information available on the Internet, it was difficult to differentiate between what was accurate and what was misleading. The new media could potentially enlighten and educate, but they could also confuse and deceive. The United Nations, like any other information provider, would have to rigorously maintain a reputation for credibility by the accuracy of its reporting. Its message must be clear, well articulated and timely.

3. Communication, however, was not a science; it required sensitivity to the perceptions and reactions of the audience. Over the years, the Department had expanded its scope, activities and reach, now managing radio and television broadcasting as well as print and online publications. It should continue to exploit the new communications technologies to get its message across.

4. **Ms. Núñez Mordoche** (Cuba) said that the technology gap between North and South continued to grow and the media was monopolized by a few multinational companies. It was increasingly important to establish a new world order of information given that the media in the developed world often distorted the news and events taking place in the developing countries. The developing world should be given special treatment in the United Nations information system and the United Nations Information Centres (UNICs) should do more to disseminate balanced

information, taking into account the needs of the target audience. In particular, the use of broadcast media, such as the radio, should continue to be promoted as a means of providing information to the illiterate populations that existed in the countries of the South. Cuba had successfully established a literacy programme entitled "Yo sí puedo" which used audio-visual aids and new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to broaden the scope and effectiveness of teaching materials.

5. Once again, her delegation wished to denounce the radio and television broadcasts that the United States Government used to provide the Cuban people with distorted information and misleading propaganda. Those broadcasts contravened international law and the procedures of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). During the 2007 fiscal year, the Congress had approved \$36 million for such broadcasts and the Government had increased its broadcasts from one to six afternoons a week; many of the broadcasts were transmitted from Miami in contravention of United States broadcasting laws. Each week, United States-based stations broadcast to Cuba more than 2,073 hours of radio and television through 31 different frequencies. Of the 22 stations broadcasting subversive programmes against Cuba, 14 aimed their signals directly towards the country; three of them were the property of the United States Government. Some of the stations could be linked to terrorists who lived in United States territory. In condemning those acts of aggression, her delegation reiterated that the choice of the kind of information that the Cuban people wished to receive was a sovereign decision of her country and not of the United States Government.

6. **Mr. Martínez** (Dominican Republic), speaking on behalf of the member countries of the Rio Group, expressed appreciation for what the Department of Public Information was doing to publicize the work of the United Nations and to promote its issues.

7. The Department had worked well with other United Nations bodies to disseminate accurate information more widely. The close collaboration between it and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had helped familiarize the public with the various missions. The Rio Group especially appreciated the conveying of information about the multidimensional character of peacekeeping to all countries, but especially the troop-contributing countries.

8. The United Nations information centres throughout the world, acting as a strategic arm of the Department of Public Information, were doing increasingly valuable work by spreading information more widely and also by making it available to persons with disabilities; that should remain a priority.

9. The Department was endeavouring to make balanced use of the six official languages on the United Nations website; but much more needed to be done to redress the current imbalance. Information, including press releases, should be produced in all official languages. Moreover, the United Nations message would carry further if it were conveyed in as many of the world's languages as possible. In that connection, the Rio Group supported the proposal in paragraph 57 of draft resolution B in the report of the Committee on Information (A/62/21).

10. In order to publicize the United Nations message effectively, traditional means of communication must continue to be used, for they were often the only way of obtaining information in the developing countries. Radio programmes in particular should be broadcast in as many languages as possible, including Portuguese; and more broadcast personnel from the developing countries, who were familiar with their own people, culture and language, should be recruited. Rather than quantifying the cost of multilingualism at the United Nations, the aim should be to reorganize the information structure and staffing to reflect the linguistically diverse world of the six official languages. The technological revolution required any international organization to be staffed with persons able to express themselves in the main languages of the world, and the United Nations must adapt to that new reality.

11. **Mr. Farhane** (Morocco) observed that in an increasingly globalized age, the timely spread of information had become a necessity and a challenge if the Organization was to make its activities known or to interact with the world's peoples. The Department of Public Information should still do more to highlight the importance of the discussions at the United Nations and their impact on people's lives. It should also strive for closer and better collaboration with its information centres throughout the world, with the other United Nations departments and with the network of civil-society organizations in the area of information.

12. The United Nations information centres were instrumental in the free flow of information in the developing countries, where access to the new information and communications technologies was limited. In the restructuring of the information centre network, the situation of each individual centre should be taken into account.

13. The Department should also focus more on the situation of the developing countries, especially in Africa, in order to inform them about the United Nations most effectively. It could not rely on the Internet alone but must make use also of traditional means of communication to reach the most remote regions. By the same token, all information produced by the Department should be in all official languages, in the interests of parity and public access. The website could, moreover, be enhanced by finding a way of assessing if the information provided met the expectations of its users and increased the visibility of the United Nations in the world. It would be an excellent thing if the United Nations could bring its message to the peoples of the world, making complex themes such as climate change, the struggle against HIV/AIDS, the Millennium Development Goals and anti-terrorism more comprehensible. To accomplish that, it should disseminate information in as equitable, impartial, efficient and timely a way as possible. Needless to say, press releases regarding meetings of the various United Nations bodies should always be drafted objectively and there should be consistency between the various language versions.

14. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that in order to strengthen international support for the Organization's activities, the Department should provide all people with accurate, comprehensive, timely and relevant information. It was important for the Department to enhance its technological infrastructure in order to improve its activities in areas of special interest to developing countries. It was regrettable that certain developed countries tried to monopolize the media in order to distort the facts and events relating to developing countries that were not considered allies. In that context, the Department should convene a seminar to address the inequity in the world media.

15. UNICs were key resources in mobilizing public opinion and could serve the Organization in its outreach activities if equipped with modern communication technologies. It would therefore be

interesting to learn what action had been taken to modernize UNICs in developing countries. Stressing the importance of disseminating information in local languages, he said that those languages should be used for developing web pages and broadcasting radio programmes. His delegation appreciated the Department's commitment to maintaining a culture of evaluation and suggested that the effectiveness of the Centres should be examined. Moreover, since freedom of expression entailed a responsibility to respect cultural diversity, the Department should play a leading role in promoting respect for all cultures, religions and civilizations.

16. His delegation urged the Secretary-General to continue promoting the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations in order to increase understanding among nations; would appreciate being kept informed about the Secretariat's initiatives aimed at promoting that agenda. His delegation called on the Department to increase the number of participants in the annual training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries and to continue its annual programme for Palestinian journalists.

17. **Mr. Belinga Eboutou** (Cameroon) said that the current agenda item was of particular importance in a world where information could quickly be disseminated. The ideas thus transmitted could increase solidarity or cause divisions and the ideas of cultures and societies with the greatest means at their disposal had an advantage. Regrettably those ideas often contained preconceived notions and attitudes that led to intolerance and lack of understanding. For example, some media reporting on Africa tended to highlight only calamity and negativity. As the President of Cameroon had pointed out earlier this year, Africa was generally stereotyped as a place of endless conflicts afflicted by innumerable problems. That caricature masked another reality, that of a more stable and attractive Africa determined to meet the challenges of development.

18. The media had great leverage in the dissemination of culture and could weaken and even destroy cultural mainstays or entire societies. By denigrating some cultures the media gave undue influence to other cultural models. In 1999, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had stated that the global information society was leading to the marginalization of most countries, dividing the world into the information-rich and information-poor.

For example, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, with only 19 per cent of the world's population, accounted for 90 per cent of Internet usage.

19. If nothing was done the struggle of African countries in particular, to share in the global information society would be difficult if not doomed in advance. He therefore called for the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society with a view to closing the information divide. In that context he commended the Department of Public Information for sparing no effort in promoting a truly globalized and inclusive information society.

20. The Department should continue to give priority to informing the international community about economic and social development in Africa and the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The United Nations Information Centres played an invaluable role in the diffusion of information about the Organization. While the status of those Centres should be evaluated on a case by case basis, he stressed that current efforts to rationalize the work of the Organization should not affect the information centre in Yaoundé, which was particularly useful for the francophone countries of the central African subregion. That Centre's resources should in fact be strengthened.

21. **Ms. Miyoshi** (Japan) said that it was significant that the participants at the recent International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, which had been organized by DPI and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, had agreed on the importance of maintaining an ongoing dialogue between Palestine and Israel. Her delegation commended the Department for its efforts to raise awareness about climate change and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and encouraged it to continue those efforts. Her delegation also welcomed the political commitment expressed by world leaders at the recent High-Level Event on Climate Change and noted that it was now time for the world to act. Member States must cooperate with the Department in promoting environmental protection and development.

22. In cooperation with various non-governmental organizations, her Government had hosted a series of public forums on United Nations reform with the aim of fostering an exchange of views with civil society. In 2008, it would host the fourth Tokyo International

Conference on African Development, for it believed it was important that Africa should achieve peace and prosperity. Finally, her delegation reiterated its support for the Department, and urged it to make full use of UNICs.

23. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for Palestine) said that DPI played a crucial role in drawing the world's attention to a variety of issues. He stressed the importance of the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine, including the recent International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East held in Tokyo on the topic of re-engaging the Israelis and the Palestinians in the search for a comprehensive and lasting political settlement.

24. He hoped that DPI would continue the Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists' Fellowship Programme, but pointed out that, even as the Committee was discussing the role of media in promoting Palestinian-Israeli dialogue, Israel continued to prevent journalists from taking part in the Department's media training programmes. It had barred three Palestinians from going to the United States Consulate in Jerusalem to pick up visas on the grounds that no one under the age of 35 was permitted to leave Gaza. The Israeli authorities were also continuing to hinder implementation of paragraph 3 (d) of General Assembly resolution 61/24 calling for DPI to organize and promote fact-finding news missions for journalists to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

25. His delegation appreciated the Department's efforts to raise global awareness of Palestinian issues, and urged it to devote greater attention to the dialogue between civilizations, particularly in the light of recent instances of defamation of Islam and the Prophet in certain western media. He praised the Department's efforts to spread awareness of United Nations issues, particularly within academic institutions, inter alia through its partnership with international broadcast networks and through the *UN Chronicle*.

26. **Mr. Nay Win** (Myanmar) said that, in the modern information age, developing countries increasingly needed to harness the tools of information and communication technology for their development, but were impeded by lack of resources and infrastructure. Accordingly, Myanmar welcomed the strategic approach taken by the Department of Public

Information, which would help bridge the digital divide between developed and developing countries.

27. Regrettably certain Powers were trying to exploit that divide and to impose their will on weaker members of the world community, in particular, by focusing only on negative aspects of developing countries and ignoring their efforts to uplift the quality of life of their peoples. In that context, he stressed the important role played by United Nations information centres around the world: they raised public awareness of the Organization's ideals, promoted support for its work, and also served as an invaluable source of knowledge and learning for students.

28. Finally, he underlined the need, in a world facing the challenges of armed conflict, religious intolerance and the effects of climate change, to foster an understanding among young people of diversity and peaceful coexistence. To that end, he called on the Department, through its outreach activities, to promote understanding of different cultures and civilizations.

29. **Mr. Elsherbini** (Egypt) said that, given the growing importance of information and communication technology, it was vital for the United Nations to sustain international cooperation in information and communication, with a view to narrowing the gaps in information flow between countries and helping build the media infrastructure of developing countries. In that endeavour, the Department of Public Information had a particularly important role as the mouthpiece of the Organization and responsible for promoting its positive image to the outside world.

30. The inability of the United Nations to resolve long-standing conflicts had affected the way people viewed the Organization. Accordingly, it was vital to spotlight what the United Nations had achieved in terms of peacekeeping, protection of the environment, pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals and safeguarding of human rights.

31. In the context of spreading the message of the United Nations, his delegation stressed the importance of multilingualism and the required balance between the Organization's six official languages, which was vital to ensuring the widest possible dissemination of that message.

32. Egypt also called for continued efforts by the Committee on Information to raise awareness of the Middle East situation, by providing objective media

coverage that would help sustain efforts to end the Israeli occupation which had begun in 1967 and to give effect to the legitimate rights of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples. In that context, Egypt supported such meetings as the annual seminar on peace in the Middle East, organized by the Committee on Information. The media also had an important role to play in the endeavour to meet the Millennium Development Goals, by raising international awareness of such issues as environmental protection, the eradication of poverty and women's and children's rights in Africa.

33. With regard to the planned streamlining of the United Nations network of information centres, he stressed the importance of dialogue between the United Nations and the beneficiary countries, taking into account the specific circumstances of each region and the need to make optimum use of the available resources so as to ensure the continued operation of the centres. In that context, his delegation had taken note of the proposal contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/62/205) to strengthen the leadership of regional information centres in Cairo and Mexico, enabling them to assist neighbouring centres in strategic planning and work programmes.

34. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the United Nations would put out a message in the media that would promote dialogue and understanding between cultures, dispel the confusion between terrorism and the legitimate armed resistance of occupied peoples and help narrow the information gap between the North and the South.

35. **Ms. Zakharova** (Russian Federation) said that interaction between the Department of Public Information and various United Nations agencies was a key element of its mission to provide objective and high-quality coverage of the Organization's activities. To that end, her delegation welcomed the strategic approach outlined by the Secretary-General in his report on information questions (A/62/205) and supported the key thematic priorities identified for the Department's work, namely, peace and security, climate change, the Millennium Development Goals and human rights.

36. It also supported efforts to rationalize the work of the United Nations information centres, based on the three-track approach, and stressed the need to make information materials available in local languages and

to organize events with the participation of prominent local personalities and the involvement of local media. In particular, she reaffirmed the need for all information centres to be treated equally, in such matters as budget allocations and staffing. She was pleased to report that the Moscow information centre was performing useful work, publicizing the work of the Organization not only in the Russian Federation but also in other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

37. Respect for the principle of multilingualism, in particular through developing United Nations radio broadcasts and website materials in all the official languages, was an important aspect of the Department's work. In that context, she commended the Department on its efforts to improve its operations, including through wider use of official languages, development of partnerships with local, national and regional radio stations, conduct of press briefings and other measures.

38. Her delegation believed that, in performance of its principal task of publicizing the work of the United Nations and enhancing its image, the Department should focus on developing the use of cutting-edge information technology, alongside the traditional media; ensuring parity of the Organization's official languages; and responding to erroneous or distorted reports in the media about United Nations activities. Without prompt refutation of false reports, many of the Department's activities would be rendered futile.

39. While modern information and communication technology created many new opportunities, it was a matter of concern that access thereto was very uneven and her delegation accordingly called for efforts to ensure equal access by all to the benefits of the global information society.

40. Turning to the priority issue of dialogue among civilizations, she observed that, as a multireligious and multi-ethnic State, the Russian Federation had learned that the coexistence of religious communities on the basis of mutual respect and universal values promoted the cohesion of society and the growth of its spiritual values. It stood ready to share the fruits of its experience in that area with the Department.

41. Finally, she recalled the hosting, earlier in 2007, of Holocaust Remembrance Day and observed that her country held sacred the memory of the victims of Nazism. At the same time, she stressed that the

memory of the victims of the Second World War could not be separated from that of their liberators and, in that regard, she deplored the rising trend in many countries to glorify Nazism and the desecrations of monuments to those who had fought against it.

42. **Ms. Cato** (Philippines) expressed her delegation's sympathy to the people of Pakistan following the recent bombings in Karachi and also noted with regret the bombing in Manila. She commended DPI for disseminating information about the Organization's achievements to a large and diverse audience and for generating sustained public interest in the Organization's key thematic priorities, including peace and security, climate change, MDGs and human rights. The Department had also broadened the Organization's worldwide reach by strengthening its partnerships with Member States, United Nations bodies and civil society and was making effective use of traditional media as well as ICTs and enhancing its relations with members of the press.

43. Her delegation called on the Department to make use of the mass media to foster the culture of dialogue among civilizations and to promote religious and cultural understanding. It expressed its appreciation to the Department for promoting interfaith cooperation, particularly through the High-level Dialogue on inter-religious and intercultural understanding and cooperation for peace. As a troop-contributing country, the Philippines welcomed the Department's efforts to highlight the achievements and challenges of peacekeeping and looked forward to further cooperation between DPI and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). The Department should expand its information campaign to as many troop-contributing countries as possible in recognition of their invaluable contributions to peacekeeping.

44. **Mr. Sealy** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), commended the Committee on Information for its oversight of the work of the Department of Public Information, which played a key role in disseminating information about the Organization's activities and the challenges it faced. While supporting the increasing use of information and communications technology to reach a wider audience, he stressed that, for the vast majority of the peoples of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, the most relevant means for disseminating information were traditional media such as the print and electronic media, including radio. He

therefore welcomed the Department's efforts to disseminate programmes and video and feature material directly to broadcasters worldwide via satellite and the Internet.

45. Caribbean programming, consisting of a daily news programme, and a weekly and monthly news programme broadcast on radio to all the islands of the Caribbean, should be continued. The Department should also report on the extent to which information on decolonization was disseminated to the Territories, including those which were associate members of CARICOM, and provide the United Nations Information Centres in the region with the necessary resources for that purpose.

46. The information needs of the CARICOM countries were managed by the United Nations Information Centre for the Caribbean, located in Port of Spain. His Government had been underwriting the rental costs of the Centre, allowing it to devote its full budget to outreach and communication activities. The programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 should allocate sufficient resources to modernize the Centre's information and communications systems and allow the Director and national information officer to visit the capitals of the region with a view to building partnerships with the media. Such contacts were absolutely necessary if the Centre was to reach a wider audience and provide timely information about the Organization's activities. In that regard, he said that the Secretariat and the Information Centres should ensure that the list of "Ten Stories the World Should Hear More About" and articles by senior United Nations officials were more widely disseminated around the world.

47. The Department should further strengthen its information resources in the Caribbean by appointing national information officers to the UNDP offices in Kingston and Bridgetown and should constantly review the allocation of resources to Information Centres in the developing world.

48. The Cyberschoolbus website, for example, was an important tool for reaching students and youth, as was the new education website devoted to disarmament and non-proliferation. However, the latter's statistical information on countries needed to be updated.

49. He welcomed the support provided by the Department for the exhibition held earlier that year at the Secretariat to commemorate the 200th anniversary

of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The Department should ensure that the topic of slavery was comprehensively and sensitively addressed in the next issue of the *UN Chronicle*, which would deal with the theme of racial discrimination.

50. Finally, he said that greater awareness of the Organization's work in the fields of conflict prevention, peacekeeping, development and human rights would lead to greater support for the Organization's aims. The Department must therefore continue its information activities.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.

**General Assembly**

Sixty-second session

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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee
(Fourth Committee)****Summary record of the 9th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 22 October 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Mohamad (Sudan)**Contents**Agenda item 35: Questions relating to information (*continued*)Agenda item 40: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of
Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*continued*)

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07-55586 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda Item 35: Questions relating to information
(continued) (A/62/21 and A/62/205)

1. **Mr. Oraon** (India) said that, in order to be an effective conduit for the flow of information between the United Nations and the world, the Department of Public Information (DPI) must use both modern technologies such as webcasts and cost-effective traditional media such as radio and print, which remained of great importance in the developing world. He welcomed improvements made in the Organization's home pages, the DPI audio library and media-accreditation system, and supported efforts to disseminate information in languages other than the Organization's official languages and to increase local content and involvement in the production of programme material.

2. Given the crucial role played by the United Nations information centres, especially in the developing world, he said that the centres should be strengthened. While the suggested "hub and spoke" model might have appeal in certain managerial contexts, it made little sense in a people-intensive sector such as the media where local sensitivities and regional variations needed to be taken into account. He hoped the workshop for information centres in Asia and the Pacific to be held in January 2008 in Bangkok would make a contribution to meeting the information challenges of the future.

3. He applauded the Department's efforts to provide information that was relevant and meaningful as well as interesting and entertaining and to cover the entire gamut of the Organization's activities. More attention should however be paid to the Organization's most significant activities, such as peacekeeping. The Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should collaborate to increase awareness of peacekeeping activities and success stories, in order to generate goodwill and improve the image of the United Nations and its peacekeepers. The Department should also play a more active role in rebutting stories based on unverified or distorted information intended to cast United Nations peacekeepers in a negative light.

4. He commended the Department for the first observance of the International Day of Non-Violence on 2 October 2007, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi.

It should do more to disseminate the message of non-violence worldwide.

5. **Mr. Adhikari** (Nepal) said that, while the developed countries had benefited greatly from information and communications technologies, the developing world, especially the least developed countries, had been increasingly marginalized by their lack of the resources needed to take advantage of new technologies, even though it was within the reach of the international community, both financially and technologically, to make information and communications technologies available to all. There had nevertheless been some promising developments, which, if properly used, could benefit people on both sides of the digital divide, for example, wireless technology, which was being used to provide Internet access to rural villages in Nepal.

6. He said that the Department of Public Information had a crucial role to play in promoting a global information system. Its strategic communications services increased awareness of and support for key issues. The Internet portal on climate change, the website on counter-terrorism, the News Centre portal and the diversity of languages and services on the United Nations website were concrete examples of the Department's successful efforts to disseminate information about the United Nations.

7. He stressed that the needs of the target audiences must be taken into account. Radio and to a lesser extent television remained important in rural areas of the developing countries and should receive priority. He welcomed the forthcoming new edition of *Basic Facts about the United Nations*, which was important for readers in the developing countries. He also welcomed the Department's focus on youth and partnership with NGOs and the "one laptop per child" initiative, which was of special importance to the developing countries.

8. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library played an important role as the central repository of knowledge about the Organization and he commended it for its training programmes, although they should be scheduled so as to make them more accessible to permanent missions. The Department should also explore ways to include journalists from the developing countries, especially the least developed countries, in United Nations training programmes. The United Nations information centres were important assets in the field, and he commended the centre in

Kathmandu for its work and said it should be strengthened to make it a more efficient regional hub. He said that any rationalization of the information centres in the developing countries should be aimed at strengthening them and should always be based on dialogue with the host countries and regional Member States.

9. Fundamental freedoms and human rights were at the centre of Nepal's new democratic reforms and his Government believed in a vibrant and responsible media. The Interim Constitution guaranteed the right to information and a Right to Information Act had been enacted recently. Furthermore, a National Information Commission was being established that would act as a watchdog.

10. He stressed that the information revolution must lead to equal benefits for all peoples of the world. The information society must be just, inclusive and pro-poor and include a proper system of Internet governance, easier access to technology, technical assistance to developing countries for e-governance and agreement among stakeholders on the way forward. His delegation would work with the international community to that end.

11. **Ms. Link** (Israel) commended the Department of Public Information for its continued improvement of the United Nations website and for its efforts to educate people around the world about the Organization. She also commended it for its impressive work to promote Holocaust remembrance around the world in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/7. The outreach programme on the Holocaust had fulfilled its task in a comprehensive and innovative manner and had expanded its efforts in the past year, developing training seminars on Holocaust remembrance and genocide prevention for national information officers of United Nations information centres.

12. The Department had organized the second annual ceremony for the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust as well as two exhibitions to mark that occasion. The outreach programme had sponsored a concert to promote tolerance, held in the memory of the journalist Daniel Pearl. It would hold a seminar on 8 November 2007 on combating hatred, and had launched an online pedagogical tool to support the development of educational curricula by Member States. The

Department's work on Holocaust awareness illustrated the evolving educational role of the Organization and was an inspiring example of cooperation between it and Israel, one that had a positive universal application.

13. Her delegation believed that Member States had an obligation to help the Department tell the story of the United Nations and improve the Organization's image among their respective publics. Accordingly, as the United Nations assumed a larger role in the Middle East, her Government had sought to cooperate with the Organization to educate the Israeli public about its goals, initiatives and values, replacing misconception and suspicion with knowledge and openness. In the previous year several seminars had been organized at universities, with invited representatives of United Nations agencies. She said that Israel, as a multilingual democracy, home of the three great monotheistic religions, was an ideal location for disseminating the United Nations vision and she reiterated her Government's invitation to open an information centre in Israel as a way of promoting dialogue and cooperation in the region.

14. In building their young State, Israelis had overcome many difficulties to become a vibrant democracy and cultural melting pot on the cutting edge of technology, and were eager to share their experience with the international community and immediate neighbours in particular, especially on the issue of bridging the technological and digital divide. The United Nations and the Department of Public Information were intended for just such a purpose: putting aside differences and concentrating on cross-border cooperation.

15. Notwithstanding the admirable work of the Department, she expressed disappointment that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continued to be the only conflict that still had a special information programme, the special information programme on the question of Palestine, which used up precious resources and conveyed a biased and misleading picture. At a time when no funds were available to tell other more pressing stories, by continuing to fund that Programme the Organization was failing to meet its own goal of focusing on priority issues. Her delegation nevertheless would continue to support the work of the Department aimed at disseminating the story of those nations that were united in their desire for peace and prosperity.

16. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said it was important to ensure that advances in information technology did not widen the digital divide between developed and developing countries. The Department of Public Information (DPI) had a crucial role to play in ensuring that the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication technologies, were available to all, in accordance with the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and in promoting the establishment of a new world information and communication order, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 34/182. The best way to achieve those goals was to improve communications capacities in developing countries, in accordance with the strategy adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at its 1989 General Conference.

17. Since many people in developing countries lacked access to modern means of communication, traditional means should not be overlooked in disseminating United Nations media products. The United Nations information centres played a crucial role in conveying the message of the United Nations to such people, and their activities should be enhanced, particularly in the priority areas identified by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information. DPI should not close information centres or merge them with United Nations field offices without first consulting the host countries, and should continue its activities related to the Palestinian question, such as its special information programme on the question of Palestine.

18. **Mr. Al-Saiyari** (Yemen) said that his delegation was grateful to all the DPI personnel who helped to maintain the United Nations information centre in Sana'a, which played a crucial role in advancing United Nations goals in a country undergoing transformation in a region vital to global interests.

19. The Department needed to devote more attention to the dialogue among civilizations, in light of the defamation of certain religions, cultures and civilizations by the media in certain countries. Such defamation increased hatred between nations and produced extremist responses. In that regard, he was deeply concerned by the so-called "Islamofascism Awareness Week" being observed at some universities in the United States. DPI faced great challenges, but could continue to play an important role in promoting United Nations programmes by keeping up with new

developments and maintaining a clear vision of its strategic goals.

21. **Ms. Jayasuriya** (Sri Lanka) said that the Department could play an important role in narrowing the digital divide by disseminating information using innovative and creative strategies. However, it was important to prioritize those strategies in order to achieve greater system-wide coherence in addressing such issues as peace and security, climate change, the Millennium Development Goals, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping and human rights. In addition, it was important to develop close partnerships with civil society, the private sector and non-governmental organizations and to continue to use traditional forms of communication as well as new information and communications technologies.

22. The United Nations information centres and services played an important role in disseminating the Organization's message at the grass-roots level. They needed to take advantage of local human resources and languages in order to convey the Organization's message in a format that was easy to understand. It was essential to provide the centres with adequate resources and to develop and update their websites regularly. As the Department promoted a culture of evaluation, it would be useful to have an interactive dialogue with the host countries about the effectiveness of the work done by the United Nations information centres and services.

23. The High-level Dialogue on inter-religious and intercultural understanding and cooperation for peace had shown that the Department had a responsibility to promote respect for cultural diversity and understanding among cultures and religions. Her delegation acknowledged the Department's role in promoting peacekeeping operations in both troop-contributing and host countries and noted that it was important to defend the reputation of peacekeepers, who were sometimes the subject of unsubstantiated allegations and who discharged their duties in difficult circumstances.

24. **Mr. Al-Hosani** (United Arab Emirates) said that modern communications tools such as the Internet and satellites were creating an information gap between the developed and the developing countries that lacked sufficient resources to gain access to those tools. That gap was being exploited by certain hegemonic media institutions to marginalize and in some cases distort the

histories, civilizations and creeds of certain peoples. A new world information and communication order was needed, with assistance provided to developing countries to acquire information and communications technology, as was an international code of ethics to establish objective standards and protect media personnel in conflict zones.

25. He expressed satisfaction with the efforts of DPI to enhance its capabilities to help the United Nations confront global threats. Those efforts should include developing language broadcasts and Internet sites in Arabic, alongside the other official languages, strengthening cooperation between DPI and non-governmental organizations, and opening more information centres in developing States. The United Nations needed to fulfil its responsibility, as provided for in the relevant resolutions, to disseminate information on the situation in the Middle East and the situation of Palestinians under Israeli occupation.

26. His country had recently established a Higher Media Council to ensure that its positions on economic, political and social questions were disseminated to the public. It had passed new legislation to address such issues as intellectual property and access to the latest digital technology, with a view to keeping its society connected globally while remaining true to its traditional heritage. International cooperation on those issues would contribute to greater international understanding for generations to come.

27. **Mr. Al-Sarawi** (Kuwait), noting that new developments in communications technology were rapid and continual, commended the efforts of DPI to keep up with them. It was imperative to ensure that media were used for dialogue among all peoples rather than as a tool for imposing one particular culture or ideology on others. DPI should redouble its assistance to developing countries to help close the digital divide. There should be parity among the official languages, including Arabic, in the Department's activities. He praised the cooperation between UNESCO and broadcast networks and news agencies in developing countries. His delegation hoped that DPI would devote greater attention to Middle East issues, in particular those related to the Palestinian people, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions. Kuwait stood ready to work together with the Committee on Information and DPI to increase freedom of the media

as long as that did not conflict with Arab and Islamic traditions and values.

28. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) said that the growing partnership between DPI and the Committee on Information was a key element in redefining the Department's role in a complex and evolving global media environment. The Department had taken note of the Committee's comments on those areas in which it needed to improve its work. It had also taken note of the requests for additional information or clarifications on specific areas of work and would continue its dialogue with Member States in order to achieve the common goal of a stronger United Nations for a better world.

Draft resolution A on information in the service of humanity (A/62/21, chap. IV)

Draft resolution B on United Nations public information policies and activities (ibid.)

29. **The Chairman** said that the draft resolutions had no financial implications.

30. *Draft resolutions A and B in document A/62/21, chapter IV, were adopted by consensus.*

31. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the statement given by the delegation of Israel had contained many errors and contradictions. The Government of Israel should show its commitment to the Charter, international resolutions and humanitarian law by withdrawing from the territories under its occupation. It should allow the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and establish a Palestinian State with its capital in East Jerusalem in order to establish peace and security in the Middle East. The special information programme on the question of Palestine served an important function because the occupation was the longest in history and Israel was the only Member State classified as an occupying Power.

32. Israel should show its commitment by withdrawing from all the territories it had occupied since 1967, allowing Palestine to become a full State Member of the United Nations. The claim that Israel was a democratic State was contradicted by the facts: Israel was an occupying Power that had carried out acts of military aggression, confiscated property and built a

separation wall. It had brought settlers into the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Arab territories in contravention of international law. There were over 11,000 Palestinians in jail in Israel. The special information programme on the question of Palestine would thus continue to be necessary until the question of Palestine in all its aspects was resolved.

Agenda item 40: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (continued) (A/C.4/62/L.4)

Draft decision A/C.4/62/L.4 on the question of Gibraltar

33. *Draft decision A/C.4/62/L.4 was adopted.*

Rights of reply

34. **Mr. Khan Qasuri** (Pakistan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, at the 6th meeting of the Committee, the delegation of India had made untenable claims concerning Jammu and Kashmir. In the context of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the fact that the people of Jammu and Kashmir had been denied their right to self-determination for 60 years was relevant to the Committee's discussions. Jammu and Kashmir was not an integral part of India, nor had it ever been. United Nations resolutions clearly stated that the future of the State of Jammu and Kashmir should be decided through a free and impartial plebiscite conducted under United Nations auspices. Those resolutions had not been implemented, even though their provisions had been agreed on by the Governments of India and Pakistan.

35. Security Council resolution 122 (1957) reaffirmed the provisions of resolution 91 (1951), which stated that any action taken by the Constituent Assembly formed by India in occupied Pakistan would not constitute a disposition of the State in accordance with the principle that the will of the people should be expressed through a free and impartial plebiscite. Pakistan did not need advice from India on self-determination or democracy. Impartial organizations had reported serious violations of the human rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Although Jammu and Kashmir had become an issue of concern worldwide, the Governments of India and Pakistan had agreed to discuss it on a bilateral basis. Pakistan had

developed constructive ideas for the discussions but reserved the right to refer the matter to the United Nations as necessary.

36. **Mr. Oraon** (India) said that his Government's position on the question of Jammu and Kashmir was well known and did not need to be repeated. Pakistan would be better served by looking at human rights, self-determination and democracy in its own country. His Government was fully committed to the bilateral talks between the Governments of India and Pakistan.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.



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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 24 October 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Mohamad (Sudan)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 31: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (A/62/20)

Panel discussion on space tools and solutions for climate change

1. **The Chairman**, introducing item 31, said that the theme of the panel discussion was particularly timely in the light of the high-level meeting, of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that had preceded the current session of the General Assembly. It had been held in the context of preparations for the thirteenth session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to be held in Bali, Indonesia, from 3 to 14 December 2007, and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize jointly to IPCC and to Mr. Albert Gore.

2. Recalling that the current year marked the fiftieth anniversary of the space age, he said that space-based systems were playing an increasingly crucial role in such areas as humanitarian assistance, data collection, communications and the study of climate change. The work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), including with regard to the outcomes of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III), had contributed greatly to the use of space science and technology to help address the challenges facing humanity. The panel discussion was intended to show how space-based tools were contributing to the improvement of life on Earth for the present and future generations.

3. **Mr. Brachet** (France), speaking in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, recalled that over the preceding 50 years there had been tremendous progress in the use of space-based technologies, including satellites in geostationary and low-Earth orbits, for observation of the changing situation on the Earth. The technology available was increasingly sophisticated and great strides had been made in processing the data collected. He underscored the importance of such collaborative efforts as the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) under the guidance of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), and looked forward to the ministerial summit of that Group to be held in Capetown, South Africa, on 30 November 2007.

4. Space-based technology and observation could not of course provide all the answers to address the planet's problems in such areas as air and water quality, biodiversity and pollution, but could provide an important complement to surface-based observations. In that context he noted the example of international cooperation in the area of meteorology to make the best possible use of satellite resources and the tradition of sharing expertise and results promoted by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), which provided a model for international cooperation in the use of space-based technology. That model had served as the basis for the establishment of GEOSS.

5. Numerous international meetings were held on the use of space-based technology to study climate change. In that context he noted the conference on space tools and solutions for monitoring the atmosphere in support of sustainable development, organized by the Office for Outer Space Affairs in cooperation with the European Space Agency, in Graz, Austria, in September 2007 and the upcoming workshop on space applications and climate change to be held in Santiago, Chile, in April 2008 in the context of the International Air and Space Fair.

6. He was confident that improvements in space-based observation technologies and new satellite configurations would further enhance the role of space-based resources in measuring, understanding and predicting climate change. It was to be hoped that the international community would take the necessary decisions to limit the effects of climate change and adapt to the changes that had already occurred.

7. **Mr. Rind** (Goddard Space Flight Center, United States National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA)), speaking on behalf of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), said that the Panel's most recent data, confirmed by both surface-based observation and satellite data, showed a significant increase in the primary greenhouse-effect trace gases, especially carbon dioxide, as well as methane and nitrous dioxide, over the past 20,000 years, with a particularly marked increase in recent decades. The rate of increase of both concentration levels and radiative forcing of climate change was unprecedented, in spite of the Kyoto Protocol, and was primarily driven by increased use of fossil fuels. The radiative forcing effect of carbon dioxide contributed to global warming whereas aerosols seemed to have a cooling effect. Satellite-based observation would play an

increasingly important role in understanding the effect of aerosols on climate change, just as it had played an important role in observing the role of methane.

8. Mean temperatures had risen over the past 100 years, as confirmed by both surface and satellite sensing, although the situation in the tropics was less clear and required further study. The increase in temperatures in recent decades appeared to be faster than in past centuries and that higher rate of increase seemed to coincide with the increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The warming trend appeared to be confirmed on the ground by such phenomena as the melting of mountain snow cover and decreases in spring snowfalls. Sea levels had increased by approximately 18 centimetres over the past 100 years according to surface observations, although satellite-based observation from the past 10 years would seem to indicate that the increase in sea levels over the past 100 years was in fact closer to 32 centimetres. For the time being scientists did not know whether that higher rate was more accurate or whether the discrepancy was simply attributable to changes in the observation parameters with satellite-based sensing.

9. Future projections envisaged scenarios ranging from a low of a 25-per-cent increase in greenhouse gases by the year 2030 if the international community completely stopped adding them to the atmosphere, an unlikely scenario, to a 90-per-cent increase. The predicted increase in global surface temperature by 2030 relative to the past 100 years, when temperature had increased by only 0.7 degrees C, ranged from 2 to 4.5 degrees C, or, in an extreme scenario, 6 degrees C. In that context, he pointed out that the most recent ice age had been on average 5 degrees C colder than current global surface temperature and it had taken temperatures 4,000 years to recover. The current projections implied a change of the same magnitude occurring over only 100 years. There was reason to believe that the projections in fact underestimated global warming and in any case all scenarios, even those involving mid-range increases in trace gases, showed higher, and indeed, record temperatures.

10. Precipitation levels were predicted to decrease in the subtropics and lower mid-latitudes but increase in the tropics and higher latitudes. The increase in precipitation in the latter regions should not however be construed as increasing water resources there since higher temperatures would result in increased evaporation and a reduction in soil-moisture levels. He

cautioned, however, that projections relating to precipitation and soil-moisture levels remained fairly uncertain.

11. Space-based observation played an essential role in the development of global climate-model simulations, taking into account such data as land surface, changes in trace gases, the atmospheric radiation change in response to those changes, and changes in cloud cover, precipitation and water run-off, that could be used to better understand the Earth's climate and develop projections. If such models could be shown to use space-based and surface data to correctly predict current conditions as confirmed on the ground, their projections of future climate change could reasonably be assumed to be relatively reliable. In that context he underscored the importance of such space-based technologies as the Earth Radiation Budget Experiment in understanding the Earth's radiation budget and its effects on climate.

12. While there had been relatively little study of the possible effects of climate change in the tropics, the situation in the northern hemisphere seemed to confirm projections of the biological and hydrological effects of changes in temperature and precipitation levels. Those effects could be seen in earlier bird-migration patterns and egg-laying, earlier flowering of plants and trees, the spread of certain insect species poleward and the spread of tree cover higher up mountains. The most vulnerable ecosystems in the future appeared to include coral reefs, tundra regions and boreal forests, the subtropics and Mediterranean, low-lying coastal areas, salt marshes and water resources in mid-latitudes, although currently available data remained inconclusive. The effect of global warming on water resources could be severe, although it was still difficult to accurately predict changes in precipitation and soil-moisture levels. An increase in global temperature could of course also adversely affect human health and encourage the spread of infectious diseases.

13. He recalled that global mean temperature had increased by 0.7 degrees C since the early 1900s. There was a consensus that further increases in surface temperature would have a negative effect but owing to the lack of a suitable comparator in the past, it was difficult to predict exactly what the effect would be. The current changes and projections represented an unprecedented and dangerous rate of increase. It was not yet clear how rapidly the planet's ecosystem could respond; some experts suggested that an increase of

2 degrees C would bring the planet to a critical threshold where there would be massive extinctions and water resources would become increasingly scarce. Others were of the view that a critical threshold had already been reached, for example in the polar regions. It was, however, impossible to prove such hypotheses analytically because the systems involved were so complicated.

14. Climate change would certainly have an effect on air and water quality, people's health, the world economy and biodiversity. Disputes over water resources, for example, might be resolved through the use of force. The central question was how to mitigate the effects of or adapt to climate change, and at what cost, while still ensuring sustainable development. A concerted effort to drastically reduce climate change might come at the cost of continued sustainable development, although some experts had estimated that 1 per cent of world GDP would be sufficient to limit carbon-dioxide levels to 550 parts per million, still twice the level of the pre-industrial era, with minimal effect on sustainable development. Even that level could lead to a 3-degree C increase, more than the 2-degree C critical threshold identified by some scientists. What was certain, however, was that the cost of doing nothing would be incalculable.

15. He recalled that the role of IPCC was to study human-induced climate change. Working Group I of IPCC dealt with the science of climate change as caused by human activity, Working Group II with currently observable impacts of climate change, for example, on ecosystems in the polar regions and at low levels and lower latitudes, although the real effects of climate change were only beginning to be understood. Working Group III dealt with mitigation of climate change, which seemed to be possible to some extent, although there were those who believed that even bringing the atmosphere back to 550 parts carbon dioxide per million was beyond the bounds that sustainable development would allow. Remote-sensing tools would continue to play a crucial role in collecting data, monitoring conditions and predicting trends, and he stressed the need to allocate sufficient resources for that purpose. Validation and improvement of models for future projections required the continued development of satellite-based instruments to better understand how the climate system was working — for example the role of clouds and aerosols, the very physics of the system — in order to strengthen

confidence in the projections generated by the models for various scenarios of future trace-gas releases.

16. Mr. Stryker (Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS)) said that the work of the Committee had focused on climate change in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Satellite observations could provide a unique and comprehensive vantage point for earth-observation processes and ensured data continuity and reliability. Taking on board the findings of both the Panel and the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), the Committee had reorganized its work to address the critical issues of Earth observations and climate change.

17. At the tenth session of the Conference of Parties to the Framework Convention, the Committee had been requested to provide the space agencies' coordinated response to the requirements of the space-based component of the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS). The Committee's response consisted of 59 actions aimed at fulfilling observation needs in the atmosphere, ocean and terrestrial domains, as well as a number of cross-cutting domains. The aim was to allow national and regional agencies worldwide to develop a more coordinated approach to climate observations.

18. The Committee had also worked with the Group on Earth Observations with a view to integrating satellite observation systems and identifying measures to minimize data gaps. The Group and the Panel were working on similar climate-change issues, including severe weather, threat to water supplies, disruptions to agriculture, impacts on health and disease, changes to the energy supply and biodiversity and threats to the ecosystem. The Committee had worked closely with the Group since its inception and had developed a workplan for addressing the space-based component of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). It had developed the "Virtual Constellations Concept", which used multiple satellites, ground systems and related data-delivery systems from various CEOS members to provide information to decision makers in four areas: atmospheric composition; ocean-surface topography; precipitation; and land-surface imaging. It was the Committee's conclusion that earth-observation satellites provided the most important contribution to global measurements and the most accurate means of measuring climate change.

19. **Mr. Stevens** (United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs) said that the number and scale of disasters continued to grow as a result of both natural hazards and climate change. Space-based information, such as satellite communications, images from earth-observation satellites and global-navigation satellite systems could provide solutions to complex emergencies. The role of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER) was to provide universal access to all types of space-based information and services relevant to disaster management. Its network of regional support offices consisted of centres of expertise in the use of space technology in disaster management. The national focal points were nominated by Governments to strengthen national disaster-management planning and policies and to support specific national activities using space-based technology for disaster management.

20. In order to provide space-based data and information in the event of emergencies caused by major disasters, various space agencies had established the International Charter on Space and Major Disasters, which had responded to floods, earthquakes and other disasters. The Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) focused on nine benefit areas: reduction and prevention of disasters; human health and epidemiology; energy management; climate change; water management; weather forecasting; ecosystems; agriculture; and biodiversity. However, the Platform still had an important role to play in complementing those systems: it was effective but needed further development. Following the earthquake in Peru in 2007, the Platform had successfully activated the Charter to coordinate the provision of data for emergency relief. However, it had not had the capacity to respond to the floods in Uganda in 2007. With additional resources, it could make data available to all developing countries in the event of disasters and emergencies.

21. **Mr. González** (Chile) recalled that, in April 2008, his country would host a workshop on space applications and climate change at the International Air and Space Fair in the context of the Millennium Development Goals. He said it was important for representatives from the developing countries to have a presence on panels such as that dealing with the issue of space tools and solutions for climate change.

22. **Ms. Pessoa** (Brazil) requested clarification on the coordination role of the Group on Earth Observations and on the mechanisms used by SPIDER in identifying the national focal points.

23. **Mr. Ali** (Sudan) said that it would be interesting to learn more about the coordination mechanisms used by SPIDER and the regional and national institutions in monitoring and dealing with catastrophes, and about the activities of SPIDER in providing capacity-building to national institutions.

24. **Mr. Stryker** (Committee on Earth Observation Satellites) said that GEOSS was designed to ensure compatibility among systems rather than integrate systems. The aim of the "Virtual Constellations Concept" was to better coordinate various satellite missions that carried out comparable observations and to facilitate a more integrated approach so as to address the data gaps and requirements of the user community. With regard to the representation of the developing countries, he noted that in November 2007 the South African Council on Scientific and Industrial Research would assume the chairmanship of CEOS and it was hoped that the Council would develop new relationships in the developing world.

25. **Mr. Stevens** (United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs) said that the national focal points were nominated by each Member State, and that one of the Platform's goals was to ensure that all Member States had access to the various coordination mechanisms and outreach activities. In cooperation with the Government of the Sudan, a four-day workshop would be held in the Sudan in December 2007. It would be the first regional workshop of SPIDER in Africa and Western Asia.

26. **Mr. Brachet** (France), speaking as Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, introduced the Committee's report (A/62/20). He said that the integrated and coordinated use of space technologies could play a crucial role in supporting disaster management by providing accurate and timely information. In that connection, in order to make the SPIDER programme fully operational, he urged Committee members to adopt the draft omnibus resolution on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, that would provide the programme with the necessary resources.

27. Among its achievements in 2007, COPUOS had endorsed voluntary guidelines on the mitigation of

space debris. Such guidelines would increase mutual understanding as to what constituted acceptable activities in space and decrease the likelihood of friction and conflict.

28. The Legal Subcommittee had endorsed the recommendations of its Working Group on the Practice of States and International Organizations in Registering Space Objects; those recommendations constituted the basis for the draft resolution to be submitted on that issue. The work on registration practice, as well as the workplan for 2008-2011 on the general exchange of information on national legislation relevant to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space, would further advance the application of the legal regime for outer space that had been established by the 1967 Outer Space Treaty.

29. The Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had made progress in identifying and developing an international technically based framework of goals and recommendations for the safety of planned and currently foreseeable nuclear-power-source applications in outer space. To that end, the Subcommittee had decided to establish a joint group of experts in partnership with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) tasked with establishing a safety framework for nuclear-power-source applications in outer space.

30. In conclusion, he said he would introduce a draft resolution in the Working Group of the Whole covering decisions by COPUOS and its two Subcommittees regarding their work for 2008.

31. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that space science and technology, particularly remote sensing and earth observation, could help developing countries to manage their natural resources and to prevent or mitigate the effects of natural disasters. His country supported the implementation of SPIDER and was cooperating with other Member States in order to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE III. There should also be a closer link between the implementation of those recommendations, coordinated by COPUOS, and the work being carried out by the Commission on Sustainable Development.

32. Space law should serve as the basis for international cooperation in outer space. In that regard, the Iranian Space Agency (ISA) had held a workshop on space law in Tehran in May 2004 and hoped to

organize a similar one in the near future with the cooperation of the United Nations Office of Outer Space Affairs.

33. In order for humanity to derive the greatest possible benefit from space technology, that technology should not be used for military purposes. The militarization of outer space would create tensions between nations and hinder the deployment of space technology in support of sustainable economic and social development. It was the responsibility of all States, particularly those with major space capabilities, to make every effort to prevent an arms race in outer space.

34. **Mr. Mahmood** (Pakistan) said that the insistence of States with major space capabilities on incorporating the use of outer space in their military doctrines threatened to spark an arms race in outer space. COPUOS had an important role to play in preventing such an arms race and, in that connection, should establish a working relationship and channels of communication with the Committee on Disarmament in the context of their complementary roles.

35. The increasing commercialization of outer space and the involvement of the private sector also required close attention. The gaps in the international legal frameworks which regulated activity in outer space needed to be addressed. Developments in space technology and the universal interest in its applications required the elaboration of new legal norms. In that regard, his delegation supported the negotiation of a comprehensive convention on space law.

36. Pakistan had made considerable progress in the application of space technology in various fields of national importance ranging from education to telemedicine, agriculture and natural-resources management.

37. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said he was pleased that, in its report, COPUOS had stressed that local and regional needs and capabilities must be taken into consideration when implementing the recommendations of UNISPACE III. He also welcomed the initiative of Chile to hold a workshop, on space applications and climate change (A/62/20, para. 80).

38. Greater transparency would strengthen the peaceful and responsible nature of scientific activities in outer space. It was important to increase the involvement of developing countries in the peaceful

uses of outer space. His delegation welcomed the assistance provided to developing countries and countries with transitional economies by the United Nations Programme for Space Applications. However, he was alarmed by the paucity of funds available and called on donors to continue their funding of the Programme.

39. The introduction of weapons into outer space could undermine efforts for its peaceful uses, and his country, as a member of the Conference on Disarmament, continually strived to prevent that from happening.

40. **Mr. Perazza** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the member countries of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and associated countries, said that in the year that marked the fiftieth anniversary of the space age and the fortieth anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty, no nation in the world could forgo space technology and its applications in so many essential spheres. It was a source of satisfaction that a growing number of countries in South America had space programmes of their own, the two most recent being the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Colombia.

41. The new agenda item considered by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its latest session, on international cooperation in promoting the use of space-derived geospatial data for sustainable development, had prompted a useful debate that should benefit developing countries as they applied such data in vital areas.

42. MERCOSUR and its associated States continued to advance regional cooperation within the framework of the various Space Conferences of the Americas. At the latest, in 2006, all participating States had been encouraged to establish a national space body in preparation for the subsequent creation of a regional space body that would enhance the application of space science and technology in the region. The 2008 meeting to be held in Chile in preparation for the 2009 Conference would focus on space technology and climate change in the context of the Millennium Development Goals.

43. The free exchange of satellite data among the MERCOSUR countries had made it possible for them to apply the principles relating to remote sensing of the Earth from outer space. Such South-South cooperation had, together with other regional and multilateral initiatives, helped to improve the quality of life of their

citizens. Moreover, the strengthened institutional capacity in the region had enhanced the ability to use space information. In the area of disaster management, Argentina had trained local project managers for the various Central and South American countries; and an Italian/Argentine disaster-management system was using six synthetic aperture radar (SAR) satellites, one of them already in orbit, as remote-sensing tools. A first seminar on the application of geotechnologies to prevent or mitigate natural disasters had also been held in Brazil at the regional space science and technology education centre there. MERCOSUR was also working with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs to develop an epidemiological warning system; and Argentina had in 2007 offered advanced training in epidemiology which the various countries of the region could apply according to their specific needs.

44. In keeping with its advocacy of the peaceful uses of outer space, MERCOSUR condemned the deployment of any weapons system in outer space as a threat to international peace and security and human development. It sought closer working relations with scientific bodies such as the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), so as to take advantage of projects that had particular relevance for Latin America. MERCOSUR considered it indispensable to use outer space exploration technologies to combat desertification, which was a growing problem, in some regions.

45. MERCOSUR supported the important work being done by the Legal Subcommittee in analysing the legal implications of space applications and climate change; and it was committed to strengthening the international legal regime governing outer space so that it would be preserved for peaceful purposes.

46. **Ms. Hernández Toledano** (Cuba) observed that with the advance of space technology had come an increasing concern about the inherent danger of an arms race in outer space. The widening gap between the developed countries and the developing countries made it ever more difficult for all States to enjoy their universally recognized right to benefit from space research and its applications. For the foreseeable future, not all developing countries would be able to participate in space activities unless there was an immediate expansion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Greater regional and international cooperation through an exchange of experience and

technology was vital, especially in the field of climate change.

47. The geostationary orbit was a limited natural resource over which no State or group of States could exercise absolute control to the detriment of the rights of others, and legal norms for its rational use had to be developed. Likewise, non-discriminatory access to remote-sensing data had to be guaranteed, as they were crucial for sustainable development; and the developing countries had to be helped to develop the capacity to use remote-sensing technology for the needs of their people. Cuba also welcomed the SPIDER programme and hoped that it would be operated so as to allow developing countries in particular to benefit from it.

48. The currently applicable legal regime was inadequate to prevent an arms race in outer space. Therefore, the Conference on Disarmament, must urgently take the lead in negotiating a multilateral agreement on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Outer space must be protected in accordance with three basic principles governing its exploration and use by States: first, outer space must be preserved for exclusively peaceful purposes, and international cooperation and the economic growth of all countries must be fostered with a view to sustainable development; secondly, any plans for the deployment of weapons in outer space must be rejected; and thirdly, adequate monitoring and verification mechanisms must be adopted as part of space law.

49. **Ms. Knight** (United States of America) commended the work done in the past year by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Subcommittees, with the help of the particularly well-run Office for Outer Space Affairs. In its 50 years of service to the world community, COPUOS had acted as a catalyst, promoting international cooperation in space activities and, fostering a broad exchange of information among spacefaring and non-spacefaring nations on the latest advances in space exploration and the resulting benefits.

50. The Outer Space Treaty adopted 40 years earlier had established the principle of freedom of exploration and use of outer space by all States, and created a legal framework for the sharing of benefits. The various treaties and sets of non-binding principles adopted subsequently by COPUOS had generated an entirely new branch of international law. At its most recent

session, the Legal Subcommittee had brought its work on the practice of States and international organizations in registering space objects to a highly successful conclusion. The new item that the Subcommittee had added to its agenda, namely, a general exchange of information on national legislation relevant to the peaceful exploration and the use of outer space, should prove to be extremely interesting, as should the topic of capacity-building in space law.

51. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had also had a highly productive session, reaching consensus on a set of space-debris-mitigation guidelines, which were solid, technically based measures that should be adopted and implemented by all spacefaring nations. Her Government's national agencies were well advanced in implementing debris-mitigation practices consistent with the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC) Guidelines and those just endorsed by the Subcommittee.

52. That positive international development had been tarnished by the intentional destruction of a satellite by China in January 2007, which had created thousands of large pieces of space debris, most of which would remain in orbit for more than 100 years, and a much greater number of smaller but still hazardous pieces of debris constituting a risk to the space flights and space infrastructure maintained by many nations in accordance with international agreements. There was a contradiction between China's efforts within COPUOS and IADC aimed at the mitigation of space debris, and its intentional creation of long-lived space debris in violation of one of the basic guidelines. It was therefore all the more important to conclude work on the space-debris-mitigation guidelines as a clear message to the world community.

53. Her delegation was pleased that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee's Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space would be proceeding over the next few years to develop an international technically based framework of goals and recommendations for the safety of planned and currently foreseeable space applications, in collaboration with IAEA. It also welcomed the addition of a new item on global navigation satellite systems to the Subcommittee's agenda, allowing providers and users of that important service to exchange information on recent developments, particularly in developing countries. The Office for Outer Space Affairs had

provided outstanding support for recent meetings in that field.

54. The United States continued to support the multi-year workplan on the International Heliophysical Year, a truly international endeavour, with countries from every region of the world hosting instrument arrays, providing scientific investigators or offering supporting space missions. The Year focused worldwide attention on solar-terrestrial physics research, so important to daily lives, the environment and space systems.

55. COPUOS had produced useful results on a number of important topics, particularly the spin-off benefits of space exploration, the use of space-derived geospatial data for sustainable development, an item on space and society with emphasis on education, and the need to strengthen that Committee's role in promoting international cooperation so as to preserve outer space for peaceful purposes.

56. **Ms. Chen Peijie** (China) speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that China took the problem of space debris very seriously and had made great efforts to minimize it. The United States delegation would do well not to criticize other countries but rather to consider if her Government had made comparable efforts.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.